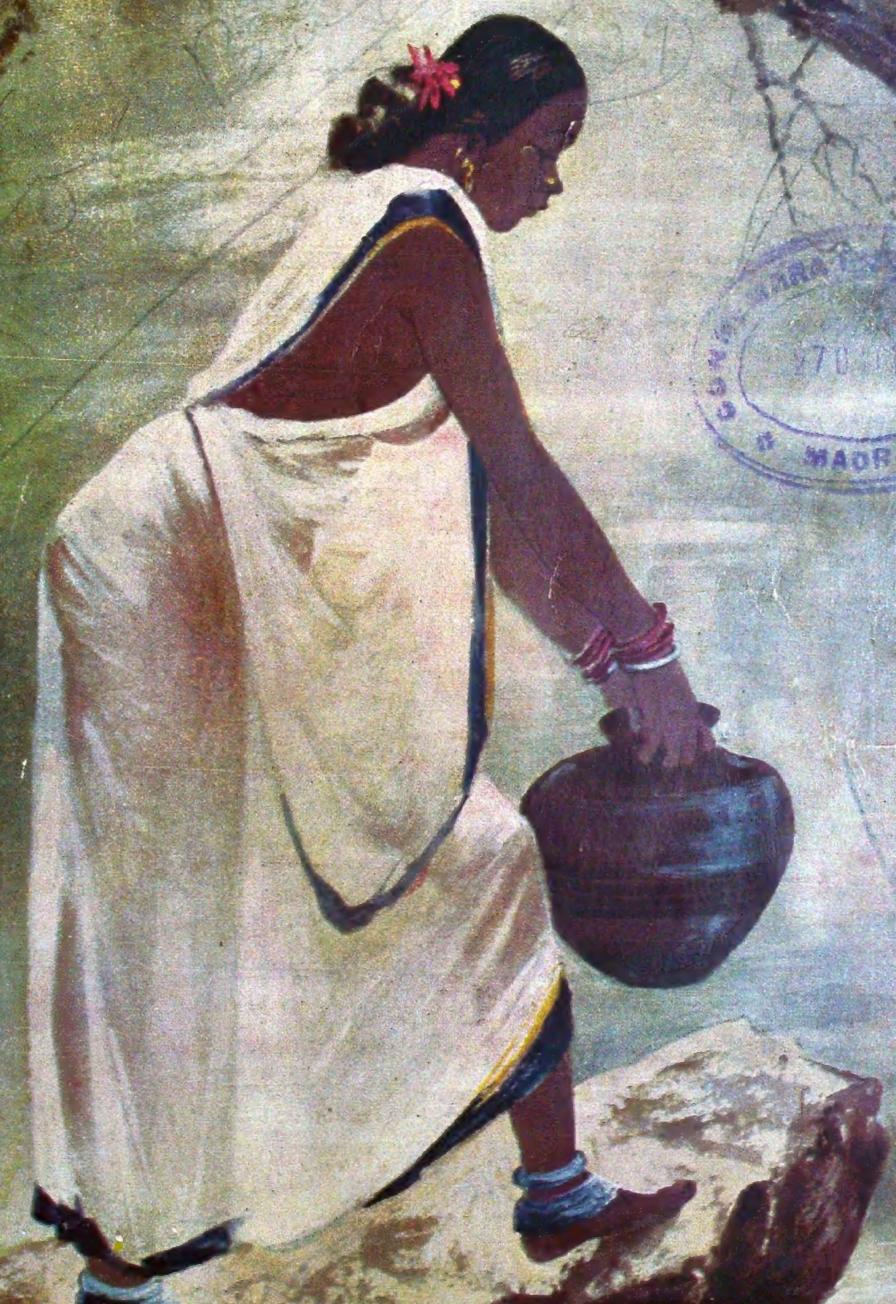


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ANNUAL



1951



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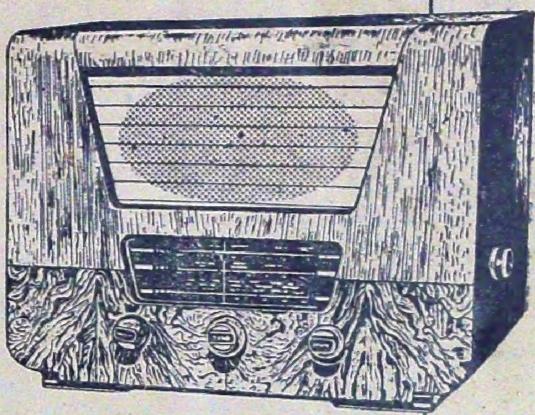
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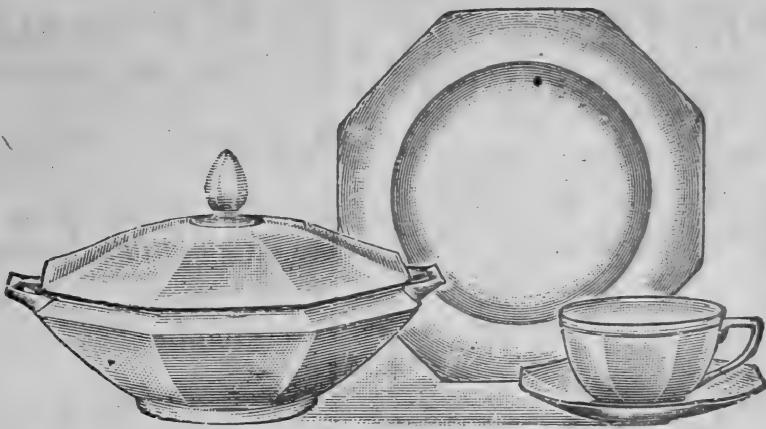
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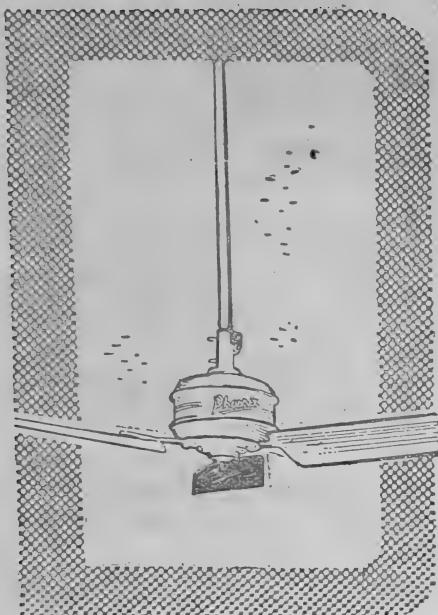
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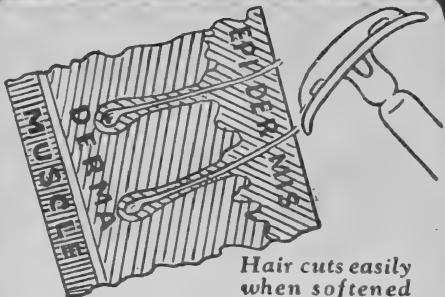
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# SWATANTRA

EDITOR: KHASA SUBBA RAU

*Annual '51*

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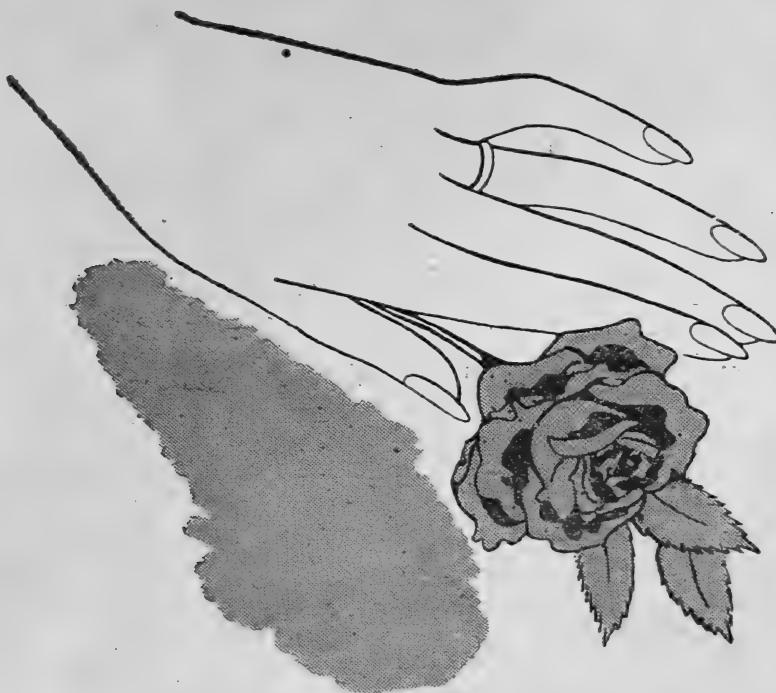
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## WASTED OPPORTUNITIES

THE country is poised on the brink of an incalculable future. The first general elections under adult franchise may prove a gambler's last throw. Those who cast their eyes back to August 15, 1947 cannot but be painfully struck with the contrast between the high hopes with which we started on the adventure of freedom and the tremendous apathy, not to say cynicism, which covers the Indian earth like a miasma today. In spite of the frantic attempts of the party bosses to whip up an artificial excitement, there is nowhere to be seen a fraction of that popular enthusiasm which even the elections to the old puppet councils evoked. Those elections served at least to afford a subject nation an opportunity to make a Grand Remonstrance. But four years of independence from the Britisher have only served to emphasise the emptiness of formal freedom.

The most tragic fact about the post-liberation era is that it has thrown up no new leadership. And those of the old leaders whom the Reaper has spared have come to arrogate to themselves an almost papal infallibility. The Congress in the person of its emergency President has, on the eve of the elections, fished up from the family chest an odd assortment of old clothes with which to comfort the *sansculotte*; but, as was to be expected, none of them fits. Mr. Nehru talks the language of revolution. But he has never been able to grasp the elementary fact that revolutions are not made to order. A people sapped by starvation, corruption and maladministration cannot be enthused by verbal fireworks.

None of the failures of our Governments in the past four years has been more harmful in its long-range effect than the failure to bring home to the people that sense of responsibility without which there can be no self-government. They have been so long denied an opportunity to make the democratic choice between alternative leaderships that the intelligentsia which had the vote has almost forgotten how to use it. When, after the work of the Constituent Assembly was over, the ruling party had an opportunity to step back and allow the people to make a free choice, it committed what amounted to nothing less than a fraud on the electorate by short-circuiting the electoral process. It showed that the party caucus had nothing to learn in this respect from the Nazis and the Fascists, whom it so liberally abuses today.

The Congress is quite sure in its own mind that it and it alone can run this country with advantage to its people for many years to come. No doubt in every country at election time

every party makes the same claim. And the Congress asks how, if there is no genuine opposition in the country, it can be expected to provide one. When somebody told Sir Pherozeshah Mehta that people were intimidated by his personality he is said to have exclaimed; "How can I help my personality, gentlemen?" But that kind of complacency is not permitted to genuine political parties. If there is very little vocal opposition today in the legislatures that is due to the fact that our rulers are intolerant of opposition. On almost every contentious measure that has been brought up for legislative sanction the dominant party has been riven by a deep fissure. But while Mr. Nehru, as Prime Minister, has not scrupled to call the recalcitrant to heel by the crack of the party whip, he goes on protesting that he does not want the Congress to give shelter to those who are not Congressmen in their inmost convictions. The choice of candidates so far made, however, shows very little indication that his idealistic exhortations to eschew the corrupt, the communalistic and the incompetent have had or are likely to have any effect. He will discover after the elections that, in vulgar parlance, he has been had. But, unfortunately for the high hopes once entertained of him, he has become an adept in reconciling himself to unpleasant realities by dialectics.

Outside the legislatures there is tremendous discontent. Much stress is being laid on the need for continuity in the policies and personnel of the Government in the interests of that stability which is so precarious in Asia today. What is not so well realised is that this kind of mechanical continuity at the top can have very little value unless it is firmly anchored in the live convictions of the thinking section of the people. Adult franchise must in the best of times be a leap in the dark. But if the party in power had in the past four years devoted serious attention to the task of widening the intellectual horizon of the people, encouraged the ding-dong of political debate, provided fresh opportunities for new talent and energies to find a natural outlet in a proliferation of those voluntary activities which are the life-blood of authentic democracy, then there might have been some chance of political consciousness seeping down to the extremities of the body politic. But it may be stated without fear of contradiction that the lump has remained wholly unleavened. In this vital respect what should have been a period of active preparation to enable the masses to partake even in a limited sense in the tasks of government has been wholly wasted.

What is worse, far from an earnest attempt being made to break the mould of autocracy into which all irresponsible power tends to flow, everything is being done to strengthen that autocracy by exploiting personal glamour and the irrational impulses of a people who are child-like in their fear of the dark. If by a miracle worthy men are voted to seats of power in the elections, they will represent, no more than those whom they would be displacing do, a conscious choice on the part of the electorate. Miracles rarely happen in politics: in such circumstances, never.

SOTTO VOCE

# OPERATION FREEDOM



THERE is no place like a public library for unexpected confidences. You take a well-thumbed volume from the rack and idly turn over the listless pages and anything may pop out of it from a dhoby's bill to a suicide's last testament. It is a veritable treasure-trove, dealing gilt shards and gold mohurs with even hand.

When the other day I found that the usual occupant of the table next to mine had not yet arrived I was drawn by an irresistible impulse to examine the pile of books laid out in orderly array. This neighbour of mine was a slovenly fellow whose pockets bulged with papers to which he seemed to be constantly adding; in his eyes there was a murky fire. Once or twice they had wandered from the book in his hand to my face. I fancied that he was about to speak to me, and I had an uncomfortable feeling that the consequences might be explosive. But he apparently thought better of it; and his eyes were soon glued to the page as usual.

His labours fascinated me; unlike Sisyphus he seemed to find perfect contentment in his unending task. Finding him absent that morning I opened one of the volumes. There fell out of it a manuscript written in a neat spidery hand which by its very first words held my attention. I am afraid I played eavesdropper without realising it till I had actually finished reading the last page. I was then interrupted, but I must reserve that story to the end. Meanwhile here is the manuscript and you will agree with me that it was certainly worth rescuing.

This is no election manifesto (it began). These manifestoes, which are as like as two peas, mean nothing and take in nobody. This is a

blue-print for action after the elections, to be placed when the time is ripe into hands that are fit to receive it. It tells you how to make manifest that millennium which in an outmoded idiom used to be called the Kingdom of God. The millennium is not "at hand," as those old pessimists who were mortally afraid of happiness used to say; it actually lies about us if only we had the sense to grasp it.

Here I must pay my meed of tribute to that wonderful man, Dr. Ambedkar, who has given us two *sutras* which hold the key to the future. They may be justifiably compared to the *Kalpaka Vriksha* of mythology and the Philosopher's Stone of mediaevalist fancy. Speaking on the Hindu Code Bill, Dr. Ambedkar astutely maintained that our Sovereign Parliament should like the Turk suffer no rival near the throne. The chaotic jungle of customs had grown up, he pointed out, because in the past we had not that supreme blessing, a Sovereign Parliament. "Now that we have a Parliament to make laws," he pertinently asked, "are we going to allow the people as such, who are outside Parliament, to have a parallel authority and make their own customary law, and is Parliament to have no right to interfere with them?"

At this point some wiseacre will jump up and object, "But it is the people of India who have constituted India into a sovereign democratic republic. How could Parliament, their creature, deprive them of their sovereignty?" Ambedkar's second *sutra* gives the smashing reply, though he dropped this pearl of wisdom as casually as if he were taking snuff. "My ideals," he observed with a proper pride, "are not derived from the Americans or the Chinese or from

the ancient *shastras* or *Ramayan* or the *Mahabharat*. My ideals are derived from the Constitution we have laid down. The very Preamble to our Constitution speaks of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. We are therefore bound to examine every social institution that exists in this country, to see whether that institution satisfies the principles laid down in the Constitution."

Do you get the meaning of that profound statement? Dr. Ambedkar holds that the Sovereign people had, at the peak of its Sovereign consciousness, produced the Constitution out of the void by a symbolic act, by its own *samkalpa*, and then become *functus officio*. Like the "toad" of fable which yields its crest-jewel to the Prince of Destiny, the Sovereign people placed the Constitution in worthy hands. Having done this, what more was there for it to do except retire gracefully from all further responsibility and submit itself to rejuvenation at Dr. Ambedkar's capable hands? But, alas, the upas-tree of sacramental marriage blighted that brilliant man at the height of his powers.

I have no doubt that the good work of destroying the sorry scheme of things entire and remoulding it nearer to the Constitution's desire will be taken up again, by other hands. But I should like respectfully to suggest to our great leaders that they must carefully consider what they are up against. I would have them mark that all attempts hitherto to establish a Heaven on Earth have been vitiated by the failure to make a clean break with the past. Memory, the most insubstantial of figments, has been a veritable old man of the sea. Religion, Language, Culture, History—all these have been tragic barriers which humanity has set up between itself and happiness. Was the first man a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, I ask you; did he speak English, Urdu or Yiddish; did he wear a tuft or did he prefer a clean shaven poll; and was he not blessed in his total lack of self-awareness?

Our Constitution is not an easy document to construe; how could it be, seeing that it had to deliver the Truth, whole and entire? But I would like you to concentrate on that high

resolve to promote "Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation." The Directive Principles of State Policy enjoin, no less pointedly, the promotion of international peace and security. The one aim seems to you to contradict the other—like a two-headed serpent trying to move simultaneously in opposite directions? That, let me take leave to point out, is due to your defective upbringing. Nationalism and internationalism, it has been the fashion to assume, cannot co-exist, any more than fire and water. To maintain your unity and independence you must deprive others of their unity and independence. So, if the other fellow builds an atom bomb, you build a hydrogen bomb; if he builds a Chinese wall of tariffs and at the same time dumps his shoddy on your folk starving for food, you build a bigger wall and dump back more shoddy. How can this cut-throat competition, this break-neck race for dollars be put an end to, unless some country is prepared to arrest this mad drift by throwing itself under the heel of Juggernaut, if need be, in defence of its faith? As I read the Constitution, it throws on us the high obligation to demonstrate that the dignity of our people can be maintained without dollars and their unity without the police, that in fact they need neither reins nor blinkers, having been freed from the twin curse of a roving eye and a roving mind. For this, however, namby-pamby talk of non-violence is of no use; our rulers must be prepared to cauterize the roots of human stubbornness and belligerency, which are embedded deep in the memory of the race. They should see that Destiny has charged them with this sacred, this awful duty; let them not blench, "Pioneers, O Pioneers!"—I seem to hear the welkin ring with their praise in the One World of tomorrow.

The people of India are singularly fortunate in the possession of leaders whose instincts are thoroughly sound, though their invention has not matched their ambition. A bold, I may even call it a seminal idea was thrown up when the cleverest of our politicians suggested that Hindu separatism should be abolished by wholesale conversion

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to Islam or at least by intermarriage. More recently our intrepid Prime Minister has been carrying on a gallant crusade against tuft and caste-mark and kitchen religion. But all of them have made the common mistake of underrating the persistence of the racial memory which makes for separatism. It is here, I dare believe, that my humble services can be of use.

I have carried out extensive studies in the physiology of the brain. They were undertaken at first to refute the stupid libel of my enemies who questioned my sanity. But as I went deeper into the subject I was fascinated by the vista of hope it opened up for suffering humanity. You have no doubt heard of leucotomy, the operation on the cortex covering the front part of the brain, which has become quite fashionable with the psychiatrists. It is claimed to eliminate the anxiety neurosis. True, along with the capacity to worry, it removes also the capacity to make plans and to take the initiative in carrying them out. So much the better, I say. But leucotomy leaves the memory unimpaired; and the memory is, as I have already shown, the very devil. There are, however, heartening indications that the scientists are on the verge of a discovery which will make an end of all discoveries. They may shortly be able to cut the knot of memory with a single clean incision. I myself shall help them to the best of my ability. Meanwhile let us all prepare humanity for the Great Deliverance. Then, indeed, shall we be truly re-born and become as children again.

I am indulging in no metaphor. This simple operation is the gate through which every citizen (except the elite for whom there will have to be special rules) must be made to pass. Some of them may be so foolish as to jib at it, as the children of the poor do, who will not open their mouths to receive a sugar lump. But let us have no scruple about enforcing it. If civilised countries could advocate contraceptives which are messy, sterilisation which is discriminatory and euthanasia which blots out not merely memory but existence, why should we be squeamish

about pressing on our beloved people the rose without the thorn?

Sensible men everywhere are coming to see that it is no more necessary to have a family for reproducing the species than to keep it going for rearing the chicks. It is a mere sentimental hang-over that makes the young mother slobber over her brat and the young father break stones to buy it milk. But, carry out that little operation that I speak of, and you will have cut the umbilical cord that keeps two healthy animals, whose natural destiny is freedom, chained to the family which Dr. Ambedkar has justly characterised as domestic slavery.

Is it a small thing, I ask you, to bring back the morning time of the world? How much every one of us has felt, at some time or other, that if only we could begin our life all over again, we should make a so much more beautiful thing of it? It is of the years that the locusts have eaten up that we think, misty-eyed. But that consciousness of the evanescence of life which makes us so miserable is but an emanation of the mind; and the mind in its turn is but a product of memory. So if you cut the tap root of memory, you cut out not only the past but the future also. The citizens of our New World will not plague themselves thinking of old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago. And Death itself will have lost its terrors for man emancipated from memory. The cow that has lost its calf is inconsolable for a few hours. Men who see their companions die should come to forget the incident in a few minutes.

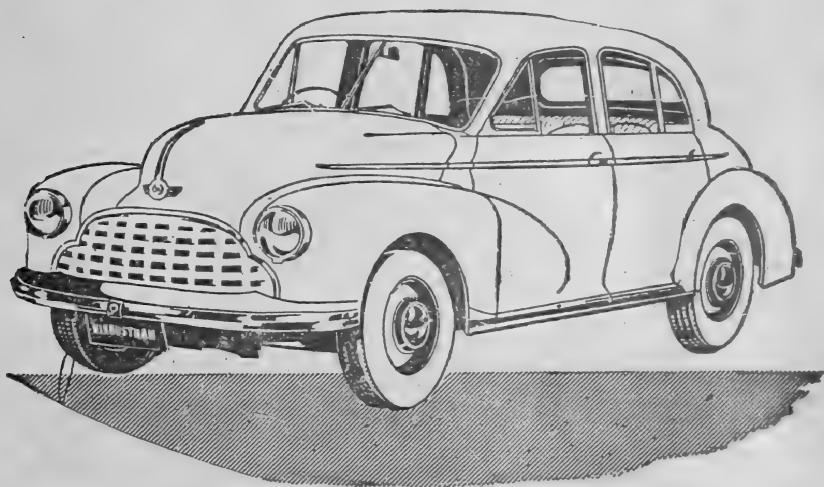
It is in wife and children that a man gives hostages to fortune. Our acquisitive society is an uneasy triangle standing on the apex of the family. Remove the family and you remove the craving for possession. Men and women will then only require to be fed and entertained. The economists—those kill-jays who are perpetually girding at us for our failure to increase production—are not going to persuade us to barter our new-found Eden for the Hell of industrial smoke or the Purgatory of agricultural dirt. Nuclear fission will see to it that the land flows with milk and honey. Perhaps there will be a time-lag—or snags in the way. What if there are?

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Memory may go—and a jolly good riddance it will be—but not our immemorial patience. If a few famines and pestilences have to be reckoned with before our scientists have succeeded in drawing nourishment for all from the circumambient air, we are game, as we have always been.

By eliminating the sense of *meum* and *tuum*, by decreeing the extinction of the family, by drying up the subterranean springs of individual ambition, our New World, sprung Minerva-like in full panoply out of the head of Jove, will have achieved at a bound that Social Justice which we have rightly put at the head of our Constitution, though the puny philosophers of the past derided it as a will-o'-the-wisp. And in a country where the will of the ruled is so harmoniously and scientifically oriented with the will of the rulers, Liberty should blossom like a flower unbeknown.

I confess that Equality might still be something of a problem. For, you will have observed among the animal kind that, even though they are not plagued by memory, they are not free from pugnacity or from the active desire to best the other fellow. We may, therefore, expect to see these symptoms among our new humans also. They may try to push each other from the trough, though there is plenty in it for all of them, because the will to excel may not be wholly subdued by the abolition of all values so-called, which are based on tradition.

But great movements often have their rise from small beginnings, as the oak from the acorn. The brain-wave that thought of symbols as an aid to adult franchise may well prove our salvation. The test-tube babies that are to be reared in the hatcheries shall, when they come of age, be initiated into adult responsibility by first having their memory-cord cut and then by being required to offer themselves as candidates for an election, of a type unknown to humanity hitherto.

The country will be divided into constituencies of equal numbers, like the Roman Centuries. And each division will adopt its own totem. To vacancies that arise from natural

causes, including the erratic operations of that bungler Death, there will be annual elections from the reservoir of healthy young humans which the hatcheries will keep well-replenished. At a grand rally of all the Centurions, each Company's standard, with its effigy of bull, bear, cat or fowl, will be borne aloft on the shoulder of its representative, the number of vacancies being inscribed on it. And on the eloquence of the Centurions and the fascination with which they manage to invest their cults will depend their success in securing recruits.

"A fair field and no favour" will be the rule: after all, it is Democracy that we are after, are we not? By making every Century numerically equal to every other we shall have ensured Equality of Status. Equality of Opportunity would be likewise automatic, since we need stint nobody the delights of flag-waving, shouting patriotic slogans, improvising magnificent lies about the mystic achievements of their totems, setting up in fact a whole world of make-believe.

It is just possible that a certain amount of bad blood may be created if, after exercising all these arts, some Centuries should find they are still short of the quota. But this can be easily remedied by the rulers privately informing the acolytes on the threshold that if they do not elect for a Century they might be compulsorily allotted to one. And as even in that World without History no man would like to be obviously made to do things if he could maintain the pretence of doing them of his own volition, the boys and girls will no doubt take the hint quick enough.

And now speaking of boys and girls....

Here the manuscript abruptly ended in an inky blur. And as I looked up, the library attendant who had been reading that marvellous prophecy over my shoulder murmured, "No wonder they took the poor gentleman away."

"Where did they take him?" I asked.  
"To Kilpauk, sir," he said.

VIGHNESWARA.

# FRIENDLY HOPES FOR INDIA'S FUTURE

**L**ONDON: Not many persons like to recall bum predictions but my mother, during a recent visit to London, recalled one which was encouraging. This prediction came out of a meeting on India to which I dragged her in 1940. The meeting was held in New York and among the speakers were Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Frances Gunther (then wife of John Gunther), and, I believe Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. In the audience were Dr. Anup Singh and others working in the interest of Indian independence. I was a graduate student and part-time teacher at the time and enthusiastic about the prospects of an independent India. My mother was sympathetic but she predicted flatly: "You are all too optimistic. India won't be independent for another fifty years!"

The fact that it was possible, less than a dozen years ago, even for persons sympathetic to Indian independence to shrug it off as no immediate possibility gives one a measure of time. On the one hand we have the fact that India's four and a half years of independence are a very brief time in the history of India or of the world. But on the other hand we have the undeniable fact that India's progress must be measured against the swift rush of events.

India's impact on world events is already very great. As a correspondent covering international relations one cannot help but be impressed over and over again how important a part India plays in world affairs even when it does nothing. To cite a simple example: if Britain still controlled the Indian Army, many things

in South Asia would be handled very differently, especially the Persian crisis.

Even Pandit Nehru's eloquent speeches frequently have a most salutary effect. Frequently what he says is unexceptional, such as pointing out the fact that it is ridiculous to attempt to ignore the present Peking Government which effectively governs 475,000,000 persons. But his saying it, and the widespread belief that Panditji is the "voice of democratic Asia", serve to encourage those in the West who can thus all the more safely echo these ideas.

#### India's Enlarged Voice

All friends of India are waiting with intense anticipation the results of the forthcoming Indian elections. In a sense the Indian elections can be said to be the most important ones occurring this winter, far overshadowing the British elections. Even a Conservative victory in Britain will not change things very much. But the expansion of the Indian electorate by some eight times is one of the great political events of this epoch.

No one intimately connected with India thinks this is going to produce miracles overnight. It is not so much that the bulk of the electorate is politically inexperienced. Even the most illiterate peasant has a pretty shrewd idea of his own interest. But the problem of India's first election is that, in many, if not most, constituencies the voter will not have satisfactory alternative solutions to his pressing problems.

In essence this and subsequent

By ANDREW ROTH

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Indian elections are likely to be dominated by the search for a modern and democratic India, able to reorganize its undeniably large resources of intelligence, manpower, and natural resources in such a way as to give its citizens a full stomach and a full life on a decent standard of living in a democratic society. Looking at the parties as they are now constituted and led one can see excellent elements in all, but in none can one detect the combination of excellent leadership, dynamic organization and sound planning that is required to achieve India's potential in the modern world.

Progressive friends of India were, of course, heartened by Pandit Nehru's emerging as President of the Congress, replacing Mr. Tandon. There was growing concern that, under Mr. Tandon's leadership, the sprawling Congress machine would strengthen Indian communalism and keep India tightly tied to the past.

There is, however, little anticipation that Mr. Nehru's election as Congress President will, by itself, accomplish very much. He can—as he has so often before—prevent *bad* things from happening without being able to do *good* things. In actual fact the emergence of Mr. Tandon was very much a product of Panditji's refusal to concern himself with the necessary chores of domestic politics. It is certainly more edifying to devote yourself to international relations and national planning. But in a country of India's present economic status, you cannot achieve modernization by purely bureaucratic means. What is needed is a party which can arouse popular enthusiasm and enlist volunteers to dig the canals for which India cannot afford to pay in cash. But this sort of idealistic zeal is wanting in Congress which, including numbers of veteran fighters for independence,—looks toward rewards for the past rather than building a rewarding future.

It seems almost certain that Congress will have a majority in the new central Parliament and State Assemblies, if only because it takes so much time to build a competitor in India. What one hopes is that the Congress selection boards are able to restrain the natural tendency to select the 'tried and true' Congress-wallahs,



Andrew Roth with Pandit Nehru

mostly in their '60s, and select many modern-minded Indians in their '30s and '40s. It is striking what a difference age makes. American political machines also tend to pay off for long work and loyalty and the U. S. Congress—of which very few Americans are proud—is the result. In Britain, on the Labour side at least, selection is rather democratic with the constituency party voting to select the candidate after cross-examining him. The result is that Labour is running quite a few candidates in their '30s and even some who have not reached the age of 30. After all, if parliamentarians are building for the future, Parliament should contain some people *with a personal stake in the future*.

The Praja Party of Messrs. Kripalani, Prakasam and Kidwai is, in essence, a revolt by veteran Congressmen against the growing conservatism in Congress and the increasing signs of corruption, nepotism and undemocratic behaviour in certain areas. Many people, particularly in the U. P., may be expected to voice their protest against the Congress through this channel. But, at least at this distance, one is inclined to feel that the Praja Party is primarily an internal Congress faction, divided from Congress only by the accident

of the electoral opportunity. One looks for new ideas and new faces in their programme and organization without much success. There is little that either Kripalani or Kidwai is saying that Nehru has not said in the past. And there is little chance that either of them would be more successful in executing their Nehru-like policies than Nehru has been.

#### Surpassing China Without Tears

During my four years of wandering around Asia, the thing that impressed me overwhelmingly has been that if an Asian country is to raise its living standards it must—except in exceptional circumstances—do it by “Operation Bootstrap”, that is, by its own efforts. India’s national planners have come to the same conclusion, but in doing so have lowered their sights so that all they are aiming at in the five-year-plan is a restoration of the living standards of 1939, certainly not an inspiring target.

Whatever one might think of the foreign policy of the Chinese Communists or however one might deplore their recent purges, there is one lesson which they certainly can teach any country in Asia. That is, that a rapid progress toward modernization is only possible if an Asian Government can rely on a disciplined mass party with tens of thousands of zealous young field workers and deep roots among the people. One cannot help being impressed by the speed with which the young party workers in China began moving things in the economic field, ending the runaway inflation and breaking the back of the hoarders by simply dumping Government surpluses on the market. One could not help but contrast the organized and effective enthusiasm of the Chinese youth with the frustration and ineffectiveness of young Indians of the same generation.

Although the Communists have had a headstart in the art of organising disciplined mass parties, there is no reason to believe that they are the only ones who can do it. In point of fact, in most countries in Asia the Communists have thrown away the advantages of their superiority in organization because of their many depressive tactical swings and their religious faith that “Moscow can do no wrong.” India, of course, is one of the prime examples. In 1947, the Indian

Communists had an amazingly large percentage of India’s most idealistic and devoted young people. But they have not even today recovered from the wild plunge of B. T. Ranadive, inspired by the sharp tack of the 1947 “Zhdanov line” enunciated by Moscow.

It is my feeling that a party capable of remaking India in a more modern form, with the organization, ideas and drive to carry it out, will emerge from the field between, say, the present Praja Party and the Communists. Of course, the present Socialist Party fills most of that gap at the present time. This correspondent has the highest regard for the intellectual integrity and idealistic devotion of Jaya Prakash Narain, having accompanied him in 1949 on a tour in Bengal. But there is not in him that degree of political toughness needed for a top-level leader. And among the remaining Socialist Party leaders, there is scarcely one of stature and mature judgement apart from Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.

There are, of course, many splinters on the left in India today—the Left Socialists, the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party of Maharashtra, Bengal’s Forward Bloc and others. But I cannot help feeling that these are not only regional but transitional. They will either formulate a new and effective line of policy and action independent of the Socialists and Communists—and dwarf both in coming years—or they will be absorbed by one or the other. My own hope would be the former. By nature a ‘Socialist eclectic’ I cannot but hope that India can have its revolution without tears and achieve a full-stomached democracy through discipline but without dictatorship.

Indian readers will have to forgive what may be considered a political intrusion by a ‘foreigner’. But this correspondent has, since his student days, attempted to understand Asian countries by putting himself in Asian sandals. Thus, I shared Indian hopes for independence long before Indian independence became a reality. Therefore it is difficult for me to approach India’s historic elections without assuming that I have a ballot in what has already been described as “the world’s biggest election” and which I hope will also be one of its most enlightened.

# MAHINE MAMMA

BY M. CHALAPATHI RAO

**I**N the sixties of the last century, History, probably tired of the mechanical profusion of the Industrial Revolution, decided to make one of her copious and capricious experiments. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869; Lenin was born in April, 1870, as an afterthought. Karl Marx had published *Das Kapital*, the Suez Canal was opened, Edison hopefully patented his first invention, Victoria, less Victorian than her subjects and not yet empress, was queen of India. Fifty years later, while revolution through violence was arranging a new industrial pattern, revolution through non-violence, with its revulsion to industrialism, was still battering at the British Empire. Porbandar, a business town, washed by the waves of the Sea of Oman, and a family of grocers, the Gandhis, were chosen for the Indian experiment. The Gandhis were *vaishyas*, high in the Hindu social and caste structure but not of the highest; they were not very rich but were not poor, wore gold necklaces and armlets; hardly literate, they were a family of dewans, with local colour and a local reputation for loyalty, ability and character. Karamchand, Gandhi's father, a heavy man with a heavy turban, old-fashioned, baronial and whiskered, was innocent of history and geography, a lover of his class and clan, to some extent given to carnal pleasures, marrying for the fourth time when he was over forty. Putlibai, Gandhi's mother, seems from her photograph a woman made for holiness and motherhood and fasting, was

deeply religious and contributed much to the experiment, as mothers of most great men do, though, as in the case of Michalangelo, a foster mother might do as well. The experiment started with neither special handicaps nor special advantages and, between the strong currents of Hindu tradition and Victorian tradition, might have ended as decorously as it had begun in Kathiawad.

Porbandar, with its princely air, gave no hint of miracles in Karamchand Gandhi's house. In the seventy-five-year-old photographs, the boy shows a sensitive and solemn face, lips made for pleasure, ears of promise and effulgent dullness. In dhoti, long coat and skull-cap, soon to be replaced by a Kathiawadi turban, he was a mediocre student, with a rather sluggish intellect and a raw memory, punctual, timid, afraid of somebody poking fun at him—the sublime mediocrity ripening into the sublime failure in life. He amused himself with rubber balloons and revolving tops, played tennis, cricket and *gilli danda*, with a detachment not expected of a sportsman; at thirteen, he was given a wife, a girl of thirteen, to amuse himself. English was at first difficult to master and for years he could only mumble it, but the certificate of his matriculation in 1887 shows that he secured 89 per cent marks in English, and English remained a strong point with him, not grammar but the use of words, which were kept literal to convey truth as exactly as possible, and the right sense of prepositions, which anchor object to action. He did not like to



Mother: Putlibai

memorize and was weak in Sanskrit. Geometry he liked; he could reason a bit. Handwriting, he neglected, and it continued to be hieroglyphic, though large-hearted. He was impressionable, and the heroes of Hindu literature impressed themselves on him with their impeccable and improbable virtuousness. He loved nursing his ailing father. He had fear of thieves, ghosts, serpents and did not dare to stir out at night; he envied the bigger, stronger boys. And one big, strong boy led him astray. Under the spell of religious crisis and reform which swept Rajkot, where his father had shifted for service, he broke one Hindu custom after another, became an atheist, ate meat, felt that a live goat was bleating inside him, abjured meat deciding to eat it after the death of his parents, visited a brothel with his friend leaving it in disgust, took to smoking, stole money to buy *bidis*, confessed to his father and demanded punishment, resented the idea of smoking in secret, wanted to commit suicide but did not have the courage for it.

These were all notes on a concertina and the sense of sin and guilt and remorse was not yet unfolded in a pattern. Gandhi's life did not remain

subterranean, like Rousseau's, for long, and there was little hidden in the end and therefore, little for him to confess. He never had Rousseau's elemental passions but he had Rousseau's strength of feeling and sincerity, untouched by melancholy. Sensuality was in the boy like a devil, driving him to premature manhood. He took a possessive interest in his wife, ordered her about, day-dreamed about her, fourteen when she was fourteen, fifteen when she was fifteen, sixteen when she was sixteen, till she was a mother when he could hardly be a father, was in bed with her when his father died. Gandhi's appetites were strong, though a life of vows was still distant. It was a life packed with the aching pain of pleasures. His sensations were physical and his thoughts yet carnal. With a sense of direction, he might have become a pleasure-seeker or a prodigal son. There was all the elemental confusion of life, sin and shrift, the desire to end life, cowardice, doubt, occasional daring, the fear of being weak, the effort to be strong, drift and direction. The possible pattern was for black and white to mix and make an average man. First the conscience, bewildered and being broken to bits, had to be put together. Consciousness was growing but consciousness without a will.

Gandhi as a gentleman at large in London was the beginning of a gigantic hoax and paradox, the preparation of a thesis. His moral sense was strong, but unsupported by a philosophy of life. He would have blossomed into a Gulliver in Brobdingnag, an Indian gentleman wrapped in Victorian stuffiness and drifting in a world of crinolines and broughams, if he had not been anchored to the strange folk left behind in Kathiawad, his mother, wife, child, brothers and sister. It was in no spirit of experiment that the outcaste, having taken his first vow, not to touch meat, wine and women, had adventured to England with a steamer ticket, a necktie, a short jacket, sweets and fruit for the three weeks to Southampton. London was gorgeously intellectual at the time and was ready to explode with highly intellectual, and Victorian, revolutionary ardour. The Fabians were filling the air with their fury, statistics and smoke; Webb and

Shaw were talking socialism and science, *Das Kapital* had appeared in English. Darwin was being discussed with elegant scepticism. Kropotkin was propagating anarchism to little effect. Ruskin and Morris created new but not fashionable interests in art. Max Muller was glorifying, and Germanizing, the wisdom of the East. Gandhi remained unaffected, busy attempting to become an English gentleman, in well-tailored suit and top-hat, even a ten-pound evening suit made in Bond Street, spending a good deal of time standing before a mirror, parting his hair straight and arranging his tie. He took six lessons in dance without following rhythm, learnt to play the violin without success, attended classes in French and elocution but went to sleep in reciting Pitt's speech. He was not a success as an English gentleman, unlike the Jaberjees whose grandiose careerism still haunts the Indian Civil Service. An Indian, perhaps, was meant to be Indian and Gandhi decided in favour of Indianness. It was a struggle for survival but there was also the first of his vows to be kept, and it was a struggle to be true to himself, under social pressure and in spite of his reading Bentham's *Theory of Utility*.

In that struggle, which was a compromise between lounging and lunging, he made the first of his experiments. He came upon a restaurant serving not only vegetarian food but vegetarian literature and subsequently on Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* and the bearded pillars among London vegetarians. Sweets and condiments were discarded; tea and coffee were given up for cocoa; starchy foods were dropped. At one time he lived on bread and fruit alone, at another on cheese, milk and eggs. Through the vegetarians, he came in touch with socialism, anarchism, atheism, theosophy, Mrs. Besant and birth-control. There was simultaneously a small experiment in plain living. He kept account of every farthing he spent and strict watch over his way of living, renting a room and cooking his breakfast and supper, oatmeal, porridge and cocoa, going about on foot, visiting the theatres rarely. Gandhi's first reading of the Gita led to important impressions

which became the philosophy behind his science of experiments, a philosophy of action. He read the Bible, of which he liked only the New Testament, attended service and listened to eloquent preachers like Spurgeon. The teachings of the Gita, the Sermon on the Mount and *The Light of Asia* became his religion. He revered Bradlaugh, while carefully discarding his atheism, respect for personality combined with rejection of views. After attending his dinners diligently, eating only bread, boiled potatoes and cabbage, he celebrated his enrolment in the High Court with a vegetarian dinner and a poor farewell speech, at Holborn Restaurant. M. K. Gandhi Esq., Barrister-at-Law, felt that "next to India, I would rather live in London than in any other place in the world." Mediocrity had become anglicised and modernized but there was a grown-up man now, housed in a well-clothed vegetarian vehicle, tanned by dietetic vagaries. He had contacted the world, seen industrial waste in the Eiffel Tower, studied the law, manners and habits of England, had kept his vow and made two successful experiments, one in diet, the other in plain living, both in a world of strong temptations, amidst inns of court, social gatherings and meetings

Father: Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi



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Gandhi's career in South Africa is a flawless, entrancing epic, in which cause and effect coalesce into a perfect drama. It was like the blossoming of the human spirit in a waste-land. If Gandhi had died at any time in the course of that progression of his personality, he might have died an obscure eccentric or, with success, an eminent eccentric. Fifty years after the dramatic sequences, Gandhi's struggle looks a perfect set piece, like Napoleon's battle of Austerlitz, but Gandhi had no textbooks of strategy or conduct to guide him and the elements which were within him were themselves unknown to him. Flesh and spirit battled continuously till in the end flesh was conquered and death was deprived of its sting. It was an original contribution to the operation of genius, with little of the monastic or theological dramaturgy of Bernard of Clairvaux or the passionate imitativeness of St. Francis of Assisi, who consciously copied Christ's work in Christ's way. Gandhi was the other Christ, the Christ of temptation and triumph, the rebel who made of meekness the weapon of the strong. He did not want to be anybody else but sought to discover himself, resurrect himself from every death he suffered and in South Africa the strong, indomitable will emerged from long crucifixion and the commonness of clay.

In contemporary accountings, the beginnings of the new barrister's life might have seemed comical. A small case came to his Bombay quarters but he lost his nerve and told his client to engage another lawyer. He had his first experience of insult from the British Political Agent at Rajkot, where he settled as a memorial-writer. An unexpected offer which came on behalf of Dada Abdullah and Co. to proceed to South Africa to instruct their counsel in a big case, for a first-class return fare and a sum of £105, all found, saved Gandhi from further embarrassment. This was History's experiment, not his, and he received shock after shock, with experience piling upon experience, till the experiment was enlarged beyond control. A week after his arrival in Durban, he visited the court only to

be asked by the magistrate to take off his turban. He refused, left the court promptly, wrote to the press about it and received unexpected advertisement. He had begun to react quickly, without sense of guilt, and he was yet twenty-four. Newspapers described him as an unwelcome visitor. Gandhi's second shock came at Maritzburg when, holding a first-class ticket, he was refused to be put in the van compartment, was pushed out and left shivering all night in the dark waiting room. This was his most creative experience in life: "There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India or should I go forward, with God as my helper and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non-violence began from that date." The "coolie barrister," left to face a white man in a waiting room in a harsh night, felt nervous, gathered his nerves, studied his strength and weakness, thought of an unending series of similar situations, decided that he should stay and suffer. It was decisive. More shocks followed. On the way to Standerton on a stage coach, he was boxed, dragged, knocked about by a white, and at Johannesburg, there was "no room" for him at the Grand Hotel. Shocked beyond recognition within a few days, he talked to Indians in Pretoria, on truthfulness, public hygiene, communal unity. It was his first public speech, a coolie talking so plainly for the first time, to other coolies, divided among themselves. Few in the audience knew English. He was, perhaps, talking to himself, some strange necessity driving him. Something had taken root; the nerves had become moral fibre. He addressed such meetings regularly and formed an association, becoming morally articulate, discovering principles of conduct. He advised compromise in the case for which he was paid; pushed and kicked about in the street by a police patrol, he refused to go to court. There was a threat of disenfranchisement and the Indians wanted him to stay. They talked of fees; fees were out of the question. He was their servant—language of the future—and he remained for three years, instead of one, while Lenin had

plunged into Marxism, battling with "falsifiers" of Marx, and was about to plunge into matrimony.

The Gandhi story of the period can run into many books, every detail fits into the pattern of development and psychology has no better theme. It requires a canvas as spacious as human nature, and even the details would not invest the story with the dullness of a chronicle by Dugdale. But the bare story can be reduced to simple proportions from the complex processes, the unending craze for experiment and assertion of will, which became Gandhi's life. He was now a leader and there was a thrill of agitation for the first time among the Indian settlers. Public work meant petitions and imagination boggled over anything beyond. For Gandhi it was to be a twenty-year stay and he made fantastic variations on the technique of petitioning, his bolder technique insisting on truth and avoidance of exaggeration. Twice death had him in its clutches and let him go by, the whites nearly lynching him on his landing from India and Mir Alam, a Pathan, who questioned his compromise, beating him nearly to death. Prosecution was not allowed, though the authorities insisted on it. Closeness to death conferred on

Gandhi immunity to fear. Forgiveness became natural and non-violence had little to do with condonation of murderous assaults. This type of humanity in a leader of causes, which was to embarrass colleagues for years, became instinctive and he rushed to the aid of the Empire, through ambulance work, in the Boer War and the Zulu War. Gandhi's reputation as a lawyer was rising, he was making £300 a month, he varied his work with visits to India, where Gokhale became his friend and *guru* and where the Congress, with its lack of economy of effort, its English medium, its haphazard arrangements and untrained volunteers, depressed him. Leaving South Africa in 1901, he was settling down in Bombay with a flourishing practice but urgent summons took him back and he resumed his experiments in the wilderness. While India was excited over the partition of Bengal, the Transvaal was excited over registration. Gandhi was now an active journalist, ultimately a great journalist, putting a lot of money in "Indian Opinion," a weekly published in four languages. In the Indian boycott of the permit office, Gandhi found the name "passive resistance" inadequate to express the real meaning of the resistance. In searching for a new term, Gandhi found the correct idea. "Sadagraha," firmness in a good cause, was suggested; it did not represent the whole idea, Gandhi changed it to Satyagraha, "the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence." There was the first of his arrests and the first of his trials, a compromise with Smuts and a breach of the compromise, arrest and trial again. One heard Gandhi mumbling the phrase, "parting of the ways", for the first time. Satyagraha was on, but again he was to go on a deputation to London, where Victoria was now a memory and colonialism a philosophy of action. Gandhi had matured, he was getting surer of his experiments.

Gandhi's outlook was undergoing quick changes. For a time, he was under the influence of Rajchandra, a brilliant, deeply religious Jain youth of Gandhi's age, who died young. Jainism became inextricably entwined in his Hinduism. Christian missionaries and Muslims tried to convert him. He read the Koran, the

Gandhi in London, 1909



*Upanishads*, Max Muller, lives of Mahomed, *The Sayings Of Zarathustra*, Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, Emerson, Thoreau, Carlyle, *Manusmriti*, the *Gita*, verses from which he memorized as a dictionary of daily reference. Words like *aparigraha*, non-possession, gripped him; he liked men of action like Robinson Crusoe. Tolstoy's *The Kingdom Of God Is Within You* impressed him most. He studied English, Hindi, Gujarati, and Tamil to show his "sincere gratefulness to the Tamils who had done so much in the struggle which no other Indian community did". Ruskin's *Unto This Last* affected him profoundly and he developed belief in primitive but human economics, that the good of the individual is the good of all, that the life of the labourer is the life worth living, and with that understanding, he was confident fifty years later that he would have written *Das Kapital* in understandable and easy terms. In 1909, when he was forty, he wrote *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, in Gujarati, two hundred and seventy-one pages, 30,000 words, on his return journey from London, working day and night from November 13 to November 22. Its thesis is self-rule in the truest sense of the word, and as a condemnation of modern civilization, it remains a classic. Here was a close concatenation of means and ends, here was also near anarchism. Ten years later he said he would withdraw nothing of it except one word, in deference to a lady friend, and forty years later it remained valid. Correspondence followed with Tolstoy, then a sage over eighty, who with no practical programme and no following in his own country, found in his Indian admirer a practitioner.

Gandhi absorbed what he read, what he saw and what he suffered and his life was a reflection of the truth he discovered. His household wore European clothes except Kasturbai, and Gandhi at his Johannesburg home stuck to an easy lounge suit, faint blue stripes on a darker background being his favourite, a stiff collar and a tie, a black professional turban and smart shoes and socks. But his body was shrinking, while the appetites remained strong. He started washing his own clothes, gave up dependence on the barber,



With his brother, Laxmidas, 1886

cutting his hair himself, cleaned even the pots of his guests, to Kasturbai's resentment. He studied nursing to nurse his children and served as mid-wife at the birth of his last son. Emerging into his thirties, he carried his simplicity forward. Kasturbai's transformation under the impact of his influence is enshrined in the moving episode of his stern persuasion of her to return the costly presents which were given to them at farewell functions in 1901. Public service was deprived of the incentive of reward and made motiveless and holy. Just's *Return To Nature* led him to miraculous quackery with earth treatment and he persisted in experiments in medicine at grave risk to his and his son's life. Faith won and instinctive accord with nature. The vows were increasing. Salt was dropped; later food was uncooked. There were long discussions on these haphazard and dangerous experiments in diet, which followed moral, not physical, laws. There was one terrible experiment on which too there was discussion. In the middle of 1906, he discussed the subject of brahmacharya with his intimate co-workers and conveyed his resolution to Kasturbai. He had been observing it "willy-nilly" since 1900; it was now sealed with a vow. He was

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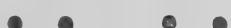
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thirty-seven and was to live another forty years.

Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm show Gandhi in the home of his own making, in his camp and workshop, Gandhi in his most fascinating phase, as a man unfolding, cobbler, cook, printer, practical communist, blending mind and body in unison. There was a distance of seven years between the two experiments. Phoenix Settlement was *Unto This Last* put into practice in the middle of 1904, fourteen miles from Durban, on a hundred acre of land, infested with snakes and overgrown with grass, containing a little spring, a dilapidated cottage and plenty of fruit trees. Round "Indian Opinion", which was shifted there, the philosophy of manual labour was practised. Gandhi had to withdraw to Johannesburg and Phoenix slowly shrank to second place in his evolution. In 1910 Kallenbach, a rich German architect and close friend of Gandhi, offered the use of his farm of 1,100 acres free of any rent or charge for passive resisters and their indigent families, and soon settlers from Gujarat, Tamilnad, Andhra, North India, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians, flocked. Gandhi advanced his experiment in community living. There was a single kitchen, Christian women cooked, everyone did his own cleaning, drink and smoking were prohibited. They built the settlement with their hands. Morally hardened, Gandhi separated the women's quarters from the men's and married men and women had to lead celibate lives. The hard core which had crept into Gandhi's Franciscan demeanour did not deprive him of a constant joyousness of life, characteristic of St. Francis, though frail spirits broke down and committed lapses. Gandhi fasted for them and the science of fasting was shaping. But to Gandhi's associates and children, life on Tolstoy Farm was the golden age and so it remained till the sunset days of Sevagram. Social hygiene formed a stern curriculum of life. Small industries were started and Gandhi was an efficient sandal-maker and carpenter. In the school, he took classes, teaching all religions, calling it ethical religion, Gujarati, English, Tamil and Urdu. There were no text-books and corporal punishment was unknown, palsy

seizing Gandhi when he tried to wield a cane. Daringly experimenting in co-education, he sent mischievous boys and innocent young girls to bathe at the same spot. Men shaved and cut the hair of one another: they had become labourers and put on the labourers' dress, in European style. No drugs were used, a case of asthma was cured with earth treatment, the growing snake population was not touched. There were fasts but no feasts. Gandhi had stopped legal practice, losing five to six thousand pounds a year, and had earlier given up his insurance policy. He had evolved his agricultural programme, his industrial programme, and his educational programme. They were elaborating themselves under his eyes. Physical appetites were now spiritual appetites lunging with hunger. Greater experiments were to follow. But Tolstoy Farm, filled with satyagrahis and cranks, was his world, his India of the future. It was all crazy, foolish, comical, exasperating, exciting, divine.

Gandhi's progressively changing phases of life are vividly reflected in the abundance of photographic material which is available. The ears remain prominent throughout, the mouth broad, the eyes large and the arms long and emaciation only emphasizes the outlines. At seven, in the decorative dress of a rich Kathiawadi's son, he looks unformed, indistinct like the print, eyes upraised, mouth withdrawn. At fourteen, the long coat is plain, the eyes are set, the mouth is broad and pouting, the

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MAHATMA: Life of Mohandas  
Karamchand Gandhi: Vol. I: By  
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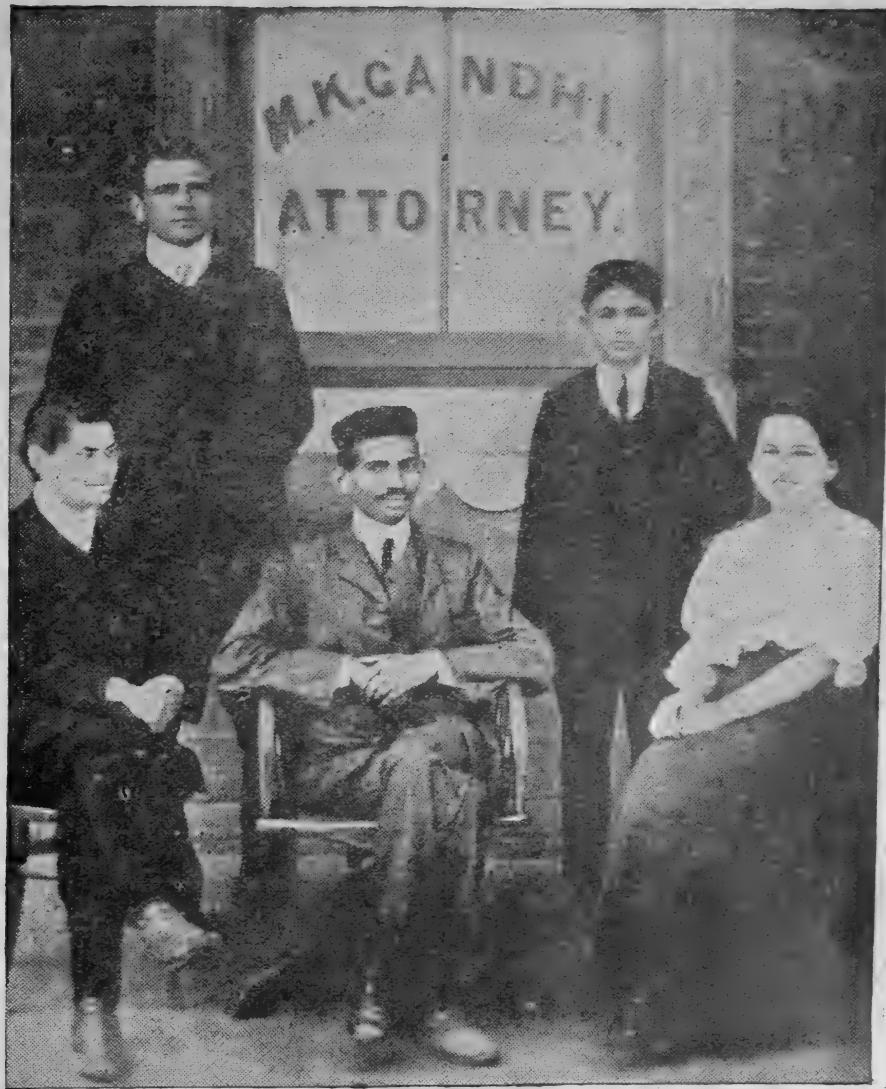
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Gandhi with his secretary, Miss Schlesin, and Mr. Polak  
at Johannesburg, 1905

cap mottled. By sixteen, a Kathiawadi turban replaces the cap and Gandhi's personality seems formed, serene, with deep hints of inner experience. As a law student in London, he is a beau, the sensuous, even sensual, lips, the eyes and the ears striking. There is a leap in development and during the early years of his legal practice in Johannesburg in 1900, he is the grown-up gentleman, grown up and wise beyond his years, with drooping moustachios covering the mouth, with a cap and ill-fitting suit, the face reflecting struggle and experience. In 1906, he is a picture of elegance, the suit very neat, the tie striped, and the uncapped hair parted with a gentle-

man's care. It is the barrister's most barristerial pose; only the eyes look frighteningly large and the ears more prominent than ever. He may have been specially photographed for "Indian Opinion". But in the same period, the ill-fitting clothes come back. During the London visit of 1906, the dress is evidence of style, almost worthy of Bond Street, but the brooding is distinctive and his sartorial past behind him. It is an Indian of the period, a decorated coolie, looking at the world. Phoenix Settlement pictures show him bare of gentlemanliness, in bare white shirt and pyjamas with bare feet. Gandhi in London in 1909 is again a gentleman but maturer, with an inward

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understanding of the incongruousness of his habiliments. With the pioneer settlers at Tolstoy Farm, 1910, he is a labourer, and then the care of the world seems to have settled down on his brow. By 1913, he has stripped himself of outward glamour and is a satyagrahi in white shirt and dhoti and sandals. He has reached the limit of emaciation, a ghost of the barrister, and during the satyagraha struggle, he looks a soldier of non-violence, in lungi, with a sack round him, holding a stick, baldish, the moustachios shaved off, a most terrible transformation. It is an angelic and depressing sight, the deep impress of a life of vows. The moustachios come back, even the suit, but it is too late. In 1915, on his return to India, he is Mahatma Gandhi, with a turban which seems too large for his head, the picture of peasant India, serenity sculptured into well-set features. The impression remained till more startling transformations followed. But the revolutionary development of personality, the outer and inner change of man, has never been so excruciatingly expressed.

The great struggle, the effect of which Gokhale, ministered devotedly by Gandhi, witnessed on his visit in 1912, was followed by the epic march, Napoleonic in its improvisation and neat execution. The satyagrahis shuttle-cocked between Natal and the Transvaal, till they were stranded in Natal in large flocks. Gandhi could not house or feed them, so he marched

them, over two thousand of them, men, women and children, into the Transvaal, a long column of which two photographs of the time picture as an epic of endurance. They look like a rabble in retreat but they are pilgrims of faith following a leader, indomitable and sure of himself. Gandhi was arrested many times within a few days but violence was abashed and the world bowed in reverence.

It was a period of inward and outward mourning, masochism on a unique scale. A fresh march was to follow, but on Gokhale's advice, it was given up and the battle also won. On Gandhi's farewell to South Africa, Gilbert Murray, in the Hibbert Journal of 1914, wrote that persons in power should be careful how they dealt with a man who cared nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but determined to do what he believed to be right. His body could be conquered but it gave so little purchase upon his soul. At the outbreak of the war, Gandhi was in London, seriously ill but carrying on dangerous dietetic experiments, living on groundnuts, ripe and unripe



At Rajkot, age 14

bananas, lemon, olive oil, tomatoes and grapes, eschewing milk, cereals and pulses. But he preserved himself for larger experiments on a larger scale, while the world was waiting to see him submerged amidst the patriotic eminence in which India abounded then. Soon Gokhale was to die but Tilak had come back from exile at the plenitude of his power and

the roar of nationalism was reinforced by Mrs. Besant's thunder. Gandhi came, decided to observe political silence for a year, making speeches which impressed few. He was a little cavalierly treated as a soul force, a man with stern, unbending longings, with a programme of vows, the vows of truth, ahimsa, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, while his personality was making that indelible impression which becomes immanent in the history of a country. His co-workers from South Africa, some young and untried, had found refuge at Santiniketan, benignantly reared in the shadow of Tagore's fame.

The eccentric had reached eminence through sheer effort of will. Strong appetites had been bound down by steel thongs of vows. Passions had been subdued by self-inflicted emaciation. Intellectual weakness had been removed by the assertion of the mind

and growing moral ascendancy. Before brute force, he had submitted, only to strike back with the aid of all the religions. Experiment after experiment had been tried to find out truth, to establish it, even in medicine. Soon millions were to be creatures of that experiment. A common man had by unceasing effort, guided by indomitable will, transformed himself from day to day, hour to hour. In February 1915, Gandhi arrived at Santiniketan. Tagore, who was on tour wrote: "I hope that Mahatma and Mrs. Gandhi have arrived in Bolpur." It is the first recorded reference to the Mahatma. He was, and was soon to grow into unmanageable proportions. In two years' time, Lenin, with his uncanny mastery of means and opportunity, was to seize power in Russia and complete part of the experiment which History had begun with little hope.



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# Nebuchadnezzar at Sea

By SANTHA RUNGACHARY

“VEGETARIAN” I said. I had said it for breakfast and lunch and dinner for three days running. But the table steward had a poor memory or I had a bad accent. He took off his spectacles and put them in his pocket.

“Fish?” he said.

“I said vegetarian” I said wearily. “You know, a person who eats only vegetables and herbs and grass”.

“I want fish”, the fat greasy lady opposite me said. “What fish you got?”

The steward’s face relaxed. “We have lovely sole” he said. He turned to me with an ingratiating smile. “Will you have some lovely sole?” he asked.

“Look” I said holding his eye without flinching. “I said....”

“Could we have some hot milk for a change?” said the squeaky-voiced young man beside me who was going to England to study International Law.

“Sorry” said the steward, “we always serve milk cold”.

“Can’t you warm it up?” the other wanted to know. “I have a delicate stomach”.

“Sorry” said the steward, “not done”.

“It smells” complained the other.

The steward shrugged his shoulders without sympathy and again turned to me.

“Will you have....” he began.

“No” I said, “I won’t. What else have you got?”

“But” he said spreading out his hands in a gesture of helplessness. “Don’t you take potatoes? You said you were a....what is it?”

“Vegetarian” I said. “So you remember?”

“Hm”, he said. “Like Bernard Shaw”.

The potatoes came. I looked at them. I didn’t like them.

“Can’t they do anything else with potatoes”, the Law student asked dismally, “except boil them?”

“Oh yes,” I said. “They can fry them whole, they can slice them and fry them, they can bake them with their jackets, they can bake them without, they can mash them, they can dress them with custard and undress them with mustard, they can....”

“I know he said, “and still they remain potatoes”.

We rose from the table, our plates untouched.

A young man stood at the top of the steps which led down to the dining room, the contents of his stomach strewn all around him. His eyes were closed and he leaned his forehead against the wall.

“Can I help?” I said hoping he would say I couldn’t.

“Yes” he said through clenched teeth. “By walking past quickly”.

I walked out on deck. Mr. Anant was at his usual place. He offered me a deck chair.

“How was dinner?” he said.

“I don’t know” I said. “I haven’t had any”.

“Pity”, he said. “Let us look at the sea for some time, shall we? It will cheer you up”.

“Will it?”

“Isn’t it beautiful?” he said. “This lovely, endless blueness.” But it is not always blue, you know. I have seen it green and grey and black, variable

like a woman, now tranquil, now turbulent, calm and still like a pool or madly raging as if trying to break its bounds. I have seen it ripple and laugh like a child and when the moon shone on it I have seen fairies of light dancing on the waves. I have heard...."

It was all very nice and beautiful and poetic and romantic. And sentimental. And also slightly mental. I was oppressed by more mundane problems.

"Mr. Anant", I said apologetically, "yes, it is wonderful, but do they serve tinned food here at table or fresh food?"

"What do you mean?" he said, completely losing his *savoir-faire*.

"I was wondering if they caught fresh fish in the sea and served it or used the preserved fish?"

"Don't you ever think about anything except food?"

"I used to" I said sadly. "About lots of things. Even poetry. But now I am unable to. When I look at the sea I think of fish. When I look at children I think of milk. When I think of milk, I think of cows and meat".

"You are a strict vegetarian?"

"Morally. But physically I am beginning to kind of relax".

"I believe" he said, "some people feel English food has something to do with the English climate. If you can't take the one you can't take the other. You take only vegetables at every meal, don't you?"

"I used to", I said. "Now I take a roll and water".

"If your objection is religious, I can quote a reassuring precedent for you".

"Tell me", I said, interested.

"Valmiki, describing the happy life of the exiles in Chitrakuta says that Rama gave Seetha, in order to please her, *mamsa* which was pure and good and which was well roasted, *nishtapthamidamagnina*".

"And she ate it?"

"Unquestioningly".

"That does make a difference" I said. "I mean, knowing Seetha ate a piece of meat so many thousands of years ago. But you say Rama gave

it in order to please her. You mean she asked for it?"

"Probably".

"Ah", I said thoughtfully, "now I am beginning to understand the Maricha episode better. It was a purely gastric urge. But the unhappy thing is", I added, "when I look at a piece of meat, I at once begin to think of the cow or sheep it came from, from there I go on to the butcher's raised knife and the bared neck and the blood flowing. All that puts me off, you know".

"Well", said Mr. Anant rising, "let us now do something other than talk about food, shall we?"

"What?"

"How about a game of billiards?"

"But I don't know how to play", I protested. "And I am too famished to learn"

"Mrs. Singh learnt in a week" he said.

"She did? She is awfully thin, isn't she? She hardly eats anything, I believe".

"Now Rita is learning", said Mr. Anant. "Her husband is teaching her".

Rita was the *femme fatale* on board the ship who was an object of much speculation, discussion, analysis and just talk. She was a newly-wed travelling with her husband and there wasn't a woman on board who didn't either envy or dislike her.

"She is at my table", I said. "She eats an enormous amount of food, I can tell you that. She and another greasy looking lady are the ones who really enjoy their food. She concentrates on meat and the other on fish. You ought to see them". "Mr. Anant", I said, suddenly remembering, "what is smoked fillet?"

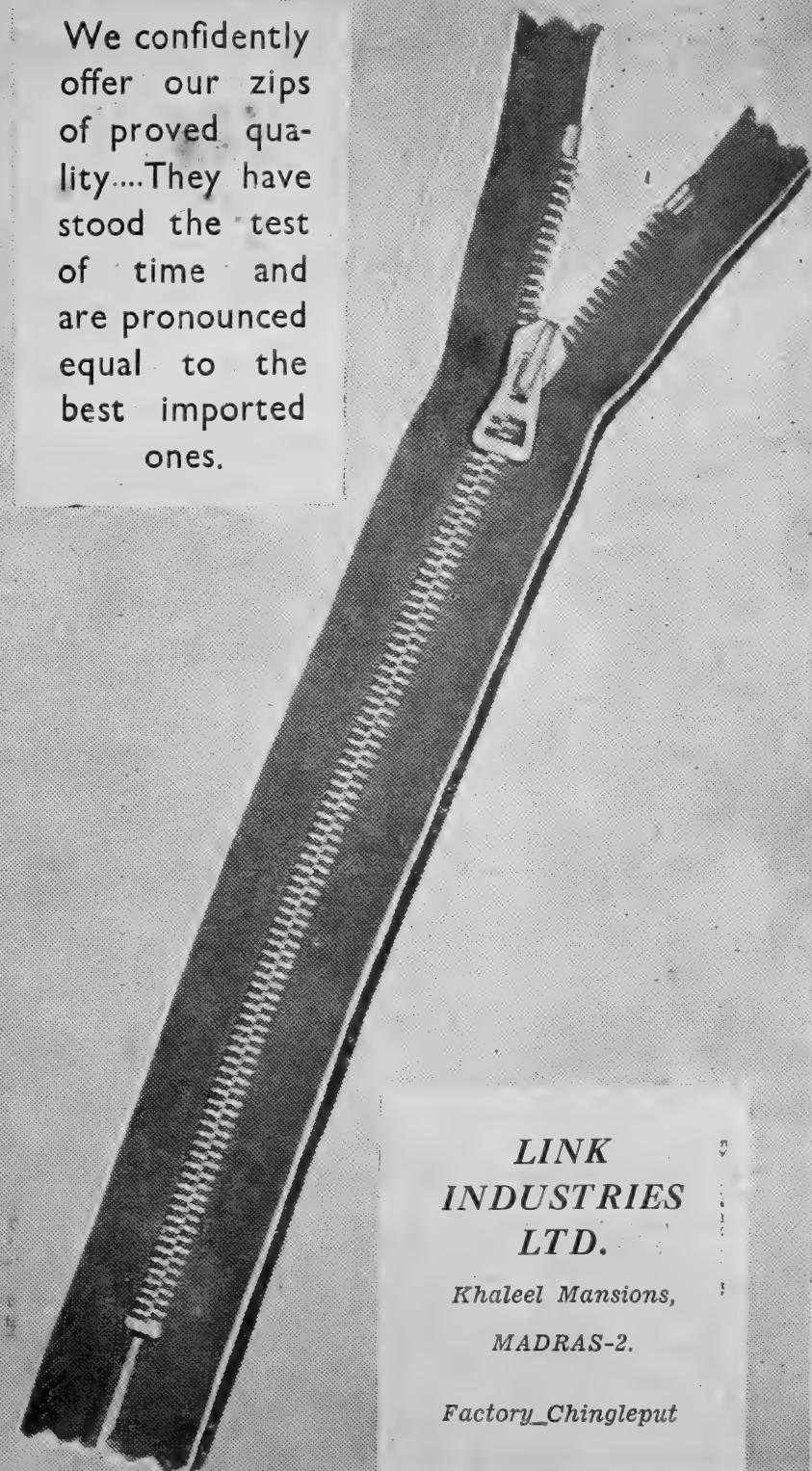
"It is a kind of prepared food, prepared from fish", he said. "Why?"

"It looks nice", I said. "I mean it looks like a kind of rice flour pudding my mother sometimes prepared".

"Rita plays quoits too. She has a devastating service, I must say".

"Why shouldn't she?" I said reasonably. "She is strong, that one. She eats meat at every meal. It looks just like big beetroot slices, you

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know. Which reminds me", I continued, remembering what had happened the previous day at lunch, "somebody at my table made just such a mistake. He drank up the clear soup yesterday under the impression it was a vegetable soup and he said it was not at all bad though he said he wouldn't do so a second time, unless of course he did it by mistake again".

"That reminds me" said Mr. Anant thoughtfully.

"I must tell you" I said, "about what happened once when I was at college. A friend of mine ate a cutlet on a College Day and learnt only later that it was a meat cutlet and not vegetable. She said you could hardly tell the difference. Now, of course, she takes only meat cutlets."

"When were you...." Mr. Anant began.

"Just a minute", I said apologetically, "I want to ask you this before I forget. Is it true fried eggs don't smell?"

"Of course not" he said. "What do you mean smell?"

"You know, an unpleasant odour".

"No," he said as if surprised. "But surely you take eggs?"

"Yes", I said, "if I am in the right mood and they are sufficiently camouflaged. I once finished half an omelette listening to the story of a friend's love life".

The young law student hurried towards us clutching his stomach like a man in agony.

"What on earth is the matter?" I said.

"Turn right", said Mr. Anant, "and go straight".

That was the last I saw of that unfortunate young man. To this day I haven't the faintest idea of what happened to him. He turned right I know but I hope he didn't go straight. For there was nothing there except a couple of low railings and beyond them the blue sea.

But on a sea voyage one soon learns to take the good with the bad and the next day, at lunch, after a passing reference to our absent friend, conversation flowed animatedly round the subject of that night's dance. I scanned the menu card.

"What is *Consomme Fleury?*" I asked the steward.

"Your guess is as good as mine", he said equably.

"Hasn't it got meat in it?" I wanted to know.

"I don't know", he said. "It sounds as if it hasn't, don't you think?"

"If you ask me", I said, "it sounds like flowery consummation and if that is the case you had better lock it up and give the poor thing some privacy".

"Well", he said, "I think I will go and ask".

He came back almost immediately.

"No meat", he said.

"Good", I said. "I will have that, please".

It was a whitish, thick fluid with a strange smell. No vegetable I had ever known had a smell like that. I will think of something else, I said to myself, and eat it. I swallowed the first mouthful. My stomach began to revolve gently round, as if on a pivot and ascend slowly. I pushed the plate away hastily and turned to the menu again.

"Steward", I said. "What is this alternative *Potage Leopold?*"

"Search me", he said.

"Perhaps you will ask someone who knows?" I suggested.

He came back in the twinkling of an eye. Obviously there was someone standing just inside the kitchen door whose job was to tip off table stewards about the victuals.

"No good for you" he said. "Whole meat".

"*Dover sole a la Colbert*" I read aloud from the menu.

"Ah, I will have that" said the lady opposite smacking her lips with greedy anticipation.

"*Saute of beef chasseur*. No" I read on and suddenly my eye alighted on a familiar name. "*Purree potatoes*. Wonderful, I will have that, please".

I remembered nostalgically the soft, spongy puris my mother used to prepare from wheat flour and ghee. If I ate half a dozen of them with potatoes I could even forget the past week.

The waiter set my plate before me. On it were a pink mess and a yellow mess.

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"What is this?" I said. "Where are the puris?"

"You lost something, dear?" said the lady opposite.

"Yes" I said. "My appetite".

That was the end of sanity. I took up a roll, buttered it and ate it. I took up another roll, sliced it, smeared the slices with jam and ate it. I took up another and just ate it. I was going to take another when suddenly my stomach began its slow perambulation. I gulped down a glass of water and rose from table. That was the worst thing I could have done. My stomach revolved faster, and my knee joints loosened up. Somebody took me by the hand and assisted me up the steps. My feet felt heavy and my head light. At the top of the steps the floor rose to meet me. A hand gave me a gentle shove.

"You pushed me", I shouted angrily into the face of the steward. "How dare you!"

"Do you think you could get up with my help?" he asked me imperturbably. "You are all wet".

"Wet!" I said. "How old do you suppose I am?"

I rose up from a puddle of bread and water.

"Did I bring up all that?" I asked horrified.

"More" he said matter-of-factly. "There is a trail running from the dining room clear enough to bring down a dozen babes home from the wood".

But it was in good company. The greasy lady emptied her guts, fish and all, on the A deck and Mrs. Singh fainted outside the nursery. She shouted "Help" just before she went under and the Captain who was of an imaginative frame of mind at once jumped to the conclusion that somebody had gone overboard. The alarm bells went off, the passengers crowded the railings, the ship was stopped and the life-boat men scanned the sea for half an hour before somebody discovered Mrs. Singh, her head in the pool of her lunch. The four young Indian students at our table disappeared one by one and reappeared at the table, wan and hollow-cheeked, long after we had passed Port Said. We all watched Rita anxiously, resentfully. Was she going to score over us all in this as in everything else? But no. One morning a sigh of happy

anticipation went round the table as Rita ate one spoon of porridge and suddenly put her head on the table. We watched her fascinated. She sat for a moment as if, dazed, then slowly rose and left the table. She came down for breakfast no more and pecked miserably at her lunch and dinner.

After Port Said the weather cooled down and food became more elaborate and heavier. But potatoes remained unedibly the same. Who had cornflakes, boiled potatoes, and rolls for breakfast, soup, fried potatoes and rolls for lunch, and rolls, mashed potatoes and coffee for dinner. I had nightmares in which the sky was thick not with stars but with potatoes all held together by a long string held in the hand of a man who looked like the table steward. When I hiccuped, the taste and smell of them congested my throat. I hated them and I couldn't escape them. I ate them with salt, I ate them with mustard, I just ate them. Occasionally there was a day when we had cauliflower or cabbage or peas but to us everything tasted like potatoes except potatoes and potatoes tasted like mud.

But relations over the dinner table improved enormously, and the plates of animal matter which appeared before the other diners no longer intimidated me. Everybody laughed and everybody talked. We deplored our past reserve and planned future meetings. But Rita remained quiet, not hostile, or disapproving, but somehow aloof, withdrawn into herself.

However bad the voyage, a ship somehow soon acquires the aspect of home. The very fact of walking the same corridor over and over again, using the same bath everyday, sitting at the table for four meals a day for three weeks, does make one feel, at disembarkation time, as if one were leaving something dear and familiar behind. I lingered on board as long as I could and as I at last walked down the gangway, I turned back for a last look at the ship. Evidently I was not the last to leave, for I saw at the top of the gangway, Rita preparing to step down with her husband. One arm in her husband's, she put the other on the railing to steady herself. And the truth suddenly occurred to me. In her case, it had not been sea-sickness at all.

# MEN AND MEMORIES



*By K. ISWARA DUTT*

"THE real interest of one's early life," writes G. W. E. Russell, the prince of raconteurs who had kept a diary since he was twelve, "is in its Links with the Past through the old people whom one has known." Having never gone beyond a fitful attempt or two in keeping a diary though I had before me the example of my father who, for no ostensible reason, maintained one for 40 years till his last breath, I can only summon memory to my aid in recalling some past events and scenes.

Among the haziest but proudest memories of my boyhood there was the thrill of having been patted by Romesh Chunder Dutt and seated in the lap of Bipin Chunder Pal when on different occasions they happened to visit my hometown, Rajahmundry, and were far beyond my comprehension. Things were different when I encountered on the Rajahmundry railway platform some eminent men—old Motilal Ghosh who said that while his skin was old his spirit was still young; Devi Prasad Sarvadikari, Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, who took us by agreeable surprise by touching the feet of our own Subbarau

Pantulu; and Bhupendra Nath Basu who was described to have chemical tears in his eyes. It was also my privilege to have seen in his own flat in Bombay, Dinshaw Edulji Wacha who told Chintamani in 1933 that he missed no single issue of the *Economist* (London) since 1861!

These landmarks in memory, so isolated and detached, necessarily begin and end in themselves. But not so the memories that cluster round Chintamani and Sapru, close association with whom during my twelve-year stay at Allahabad I have always regarded as the greatest single blessing in my life. My talks with them individually were so many and

so intimate that I could have asked for no other liberal education which, if I may say so, was also Liberal education, as they were fully steeped in Gladstonian Liberalism and their whole political outlook was richly coloured by it. Born a little earlier in England, both Sapru and Chintamani—Chintamani thought that Sapru was so much like Rosebery while Chintamani was, in my view, so much like Harcourt—would have found their place beside Asquith and Morley. Both of them were



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great conversationalists with this difference that Chintamani was more animated while Sapru was more mellowed. I have always regretted that some of the best things said by them were lost in the wastes of conversation and not often felt that their 'resurrection' was a public service.

I met Chintamani for the first time in 1923 when after resigning his Ministership in U. P., he paid a visit to Rajahmundry and gave a public address in what was by a curious coincidence called the Chintamani Theatre. His host, veteran Subbarau Pantulu, put him up in his garden house, very nearly beyond the municipal limits, ostensibly for giving him a quiet time but really for social reasons! There in sylvan surroundings I met him for a talk one night having been commended to him as a journalistic aspirant. Lying in bed with pillows on every side, he asked me in his stentorian voice what attracted me to journalism, of all professions. "Your own example, sir," I said, when he smiled and at once asked me if I could give him in chronological order the names of all the Congress Presidents since the inception of the Congress. I stood the test—and earned his friendship. He would not let me go without advice. So he reeled off a sentence in that Johnsonian manner which he so much made his own: "Even as it is said that he does not know Shakespeare who only Shakespeare knows, he does not know Indian politics who only Indian politics knows." I felt crushed under the weight of the sentence but deposited it securely in my mind.

Six years later when he came to Madras for the Liberal Federation, by which time I was on the *Hindu*, having already made some noise as the author of *Sparks and Fumes* which he personally reviewed for the *Leader*, I saw him in the company of my friend Ramakotiswara Rao, at the residence of Sivaswami Aiyar. He was in one of his happiest moods and talked to us of men and things. There is one episode which Madras will very much enjoy even at this distance of time. Somehow Ananda Charlu, well-known for his rugged independence, figured in our talk when Chintamani turned round and said: Have you ever heard

this? And it tumbled down pell-mell:

Ananda Charlu once appeared before Muthuswami Iyer and in the course of his argument ventured a quotation. "Kullukbhat once said," he began when Muthuswami Iyer brusquely interrupted him and remarked: "I am not interested in what Kullukbhat said or Anandbhat loved to quote. You may proceed with the main argument." Ananda-charlu immediately retorted, "Nor do I bother what Muthukbhat thinks about it."

To such stories there was no end. The general talk itself was full of interesting bits of information as well as obiter dicta.

Chintamani was away in London at the Round Table Conference when I joined the *Leader* at the beginning of 1931. On his return to Allahabad he was invited one day by Gandhiji to give his exposition of the Conference proceedings. The only other man present on the occasion was Sardar Patel who was, it seems, a silent listener. At the end Gandhiji was reported to have said: "Mr. Chintamani, I now understand why Gokhale compared your mind to a tailor's shop where every piece of cloth is cut to its proper size and shape."

On February 16 (1931) visitors poured into his room at the *Leader* office to hear his reactions to the R. T. C. and his impressions of the delegates. Having been sent for by Chintamani who apparently realised what my presence meant, I sat with my ears pricked up. It was a truly memorable evening. It is not desirable yet to record all that he said about almost every one of the Indian delegates. What he, however, said of his friends Srinivasa Sastri and Rama-chandra Rao may well be chronicled.

In all matters, big and small, and in respect of every person, big or small, Sastri's dealings are absolutely straightforward, honourable and unselfish. But the one trouble with him is that while he takes a long time for making up his mind, and then takes up as much time in considering whether to express his mind as made up, it also takes him very long to decide on the form in which he should say it. On several occasions, even in spite of rehearsals, he would not muster up

courage to rise and say what was expected of him and what he himself wanted to say. In him we had a leader who never led.

And this of Mocherla Ramachandra Rao:

In the entire R. T. C. there was not a man who was less pretentious or more profound. The India Office could hardly afford to cope with his demand for blue books. He is India's greatest master of detail in politics.

Speaking of him Chintamani was reminded of their earlier visit to London in 1919 and recalled how on one occasion Ramachandra Rao and Lord Pentland met and inadvertently walked away with each other's hat!

Several things come to my mind in connection with Chintamani's first visit to London under the Montagu spell. He saw then, among others, Lord Haldane to whom he carried a letter of introduction. Haldane straightaway told him: 'If you want the Indian question to receive proper attention in London, you must simply rush to Spender and prevail upon him to do a leader. Chintamani said he did not know Spender though he desired to meet him when Haldane gave him a line for the famous Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*. Spender asked Chintamani to his surprise to write an article on the Indian question and hand it to him. "But it won't have the Spender touch," protested Chintamani. "Leave the Spender touch to Spender" said Spender, "but bring me the article." Next day it was done. "When I read Spender's leader," said Chintamani to me, "I could find no trace of my handiwork. It was transformed beyond recognition with the pencil of a master."

Chintamani enjoyed his visits to London immensely and some light may be thrown here on the social or personal aspect of his life. He was Johnsonian as much in his strong prejudices and many oddities as in his characteristic utterances. He not only visited every vegetarian restaurant in London but visited them in the alphabetical order and of course, he remembered their names too. He used to carry a cigarette case holding

20 cigarettes—and of 20 different brands!

Extremely agreeable on the personal side Chintamani was inflexible in politics. His mind was cut in bronze. He sacrificed many friendships for the sake of his opinions but not a single opinion for the sake of any friend, much less for the sake of any gain. There was crisis in his career when as Editor of the *Leader*, he pursued the Montagu line while Pandit Malaviya who, as the Chairman of the Board of Directors and also the President of the Congress, was committed to the rejection of the Montford Reforms. So one day Chintamani told Malaviyaji: "It is not right that I should, as Editor of the *Leader*, follow a policy diametrically opposite to yours when yours is the right to lay down the policy of the paper. Panditji, you should let me go." Malaviya's reply was characteristic of his breadth of vision and magnanimity: "My dear Chintamani," he said, "both you and I love the *Leader* and want it to prosper. Its future lies more with you as Editor than with me as Chairman of the Board of Directors. If, in order to avoid any embarrassment, one of us should drop out, let it be me. You must necessarily continue." All this was part of a great tradition which has alas! gone out of our journalism and public life.

One of the most rational men in our public life, Chintamani, in his later years, was too much swayed by the unknown 'spirits' of the other world to the extent of believing in anything. One day he seriously told me that a certain editorial in the *Leader* was written during one of his seances, by a committee of three, consisting of Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao, Gopalakrishna Gokhale and V. Krishnaswami Iyer! One could contradict him only at the peril of losing his friendship. He evolved a strange theory about the previous lives of some of the world's biggest men. He repeatedly told me that Mussolini was in his previous life Julius Caesar, Hitler was Hannibal, Woodrow Wilson was Pericles, Morley was Marcus Aurelius, and so on.

About this most interesting and vital personality there is much more that could be written but I must now turn to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. There

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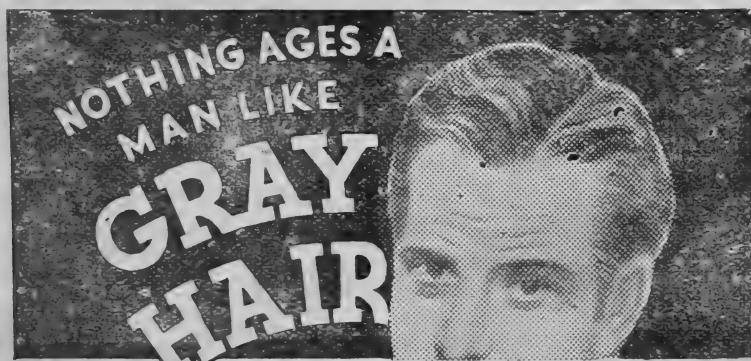
was something Olympian about him—and he had a truly Hellenic mind. Wherever he sat he was at the head of the table, and he instinctively commanded attention and respect. He touched life at many points, always striking a noble note and asking for no return.

When I met him for the first time in Madras at Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's residence towards the end of 1929, I was reminded of what A. G. G. said of Grey, that he won by his presence, and the high seriousness of purpose and firmness of mind which that presence meant. Two years later, at Allahabad, when I renewed my contact with him, he was at the height of his glory, having established his personal ascendancy at the R. T. C. In London he happened to part company with Chintamani and the other Liberals on the Hindu-Muslim question, but in all his talks never had he said one word about anyone in private which he could not afford to say in public. Political opponents are seldom discussed in the accents of such an impersonal voice.

From 1934, the year I left the *Leader* and launched the *Twentieth Century*,

to 1942 when I was whisked away to Jaipur, it was my proud privilege to have become a part of his household and very nearly his political shadow. There was nothing that he withheld from me; his political correspondence passed through me; and he reposed the utmost confidence in me. His residence—19 Albert Road—as famous a private residence as Anand Bhawan in the days of Motilal Nehru, answered to Sir Tej's own description of Lord Reading's 23 (?) Curzon Road in London as the rendezvous of all politicians in difficulty. Almost everybody of consequence I met under Sir Tej's hospitable roof, either at lunch or dinner while on several occasions when he had political talks with prominent men individually I was the only person present. Many were the inside stories that it was my lot to collect.

Here is a truly funny one. While he was battling with the Tories, in London, Lord Reading desired to bring Sir Tej and Mr. Churchill together for a cordial talk. He asked them both to dinner. Mr. Churchill excused himself saying: "I don't want to



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meet that man, Sapru. He is a revolutionary!" Sir Tej so much enjoyed telling this story. And there was a sequel to it. When Mr. Randolph Churchill, Mr. Winston Churchill's son and a journalist, called on him, Sir Tej politely declined to see any Churchill, for the matter of that!

He was at his best when he was truly indignant. Speaking to a high-placed Englishman from England about the indiscretions of Whitehall, he shouted at the top of his voice: "Why do you send to India Viceroys who are third rate and Governors who look like engine-drivers?"

He reacted violently to wilful misrepresentation. When he was the Law Member, he heard on good authority that the Governor of U. P., Sir Harcourt Butler, was telling his friends that he (Sir Tej) was responsible for Motilalji's arrest. Sir Tej grew wild. He at once wrote to Lord Reading suggesting that Butler should either give him a written apology for such a blatant falsehood or resign his Governorship so that he too might step aside the Law Membership and sue him in a court of law. And let Sir Harcourt Butler realise, he said, that *seven generations of the Butler family* will not be able to pay the damages (a phrase which became famous later). Lord Reading who had some anxious moments shared his thoughts with the present Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales, who was at that time in India. Both felt that Sir Tej had every reason to feel hurt. The result was that the Butler apology was in Sir Tej's hands in due course and in his archives later.

Never could he conceal his feelings when he felt strongly. He made no secret of his intense dislike of Hoare and Linlithgow. He had several English friends to whom he wrote freely and who reciprocated his confidence. Among the British Liberals he had great friends, notably the late Lord Lothian and the now venerable Viscount Samuel. For Lord Sankey among the Labourites he had special regard.

In India, the Princes were on the most intimate terms with him while Muslim leaders, of whatever school, revelled in his company. Among the Hindus he had particular softness for the men from the South and he



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thought highly of their intellectual gifts and the quality of simplicity in their personal life.

An eminent product of British culture, he was madly fond of Urdu. "The best Urdu is spoken at only three places in India" he used to tell me. "They are Old Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad." To Hyderabad he went often on professional business, and whenever he went there, the Nawabs gathered round him. Once when the Nizam invited him, a distinguished gathering, including High Court Judges, was present to do him honour. After the party broke up, one of them—Sir Tej loved to narrate the story—rushed to him and said: "Sir Tej, how thankful we should be to you! Was it not due to your presence at the Palace that for the first time the Nizam gave us at least iced water to drink!"

It is hard to find another man with such a high sense of honour. He once went to Srinagar on the Maharaja's invitation to give him some advice. While leaving for Allahabad he was the recipient of a sealed cover, on opening which, he found a cheque for Rs. 30,000. (Contrary to popular opinion, Sir Tej was not rich as he always lived like a Prince and saved precious little). But nothing could tempt him. He at once returned the cheque to the Maharaja and wrote to him saying that it was his last visit to Kashmir if they ever thought of paying him for any service of his to the land of his forefathers!

That was the secret of his influence with Kashmir and other Princes and why he could virtually appoint Minister after Minister, Judge after Judge in some Indian States. One can have no idea of the plethora of aspirants to high office who invariably sought his help. When in 1942, at his own suggestion, I ransacked all his papers I came across letters from some of India's leading men, asking for this favour or that—for instance, from a Governor asking for an appointment for his son, from a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council pleading for his son-in-law, from a top Muslim Leaguer for a judgeship in the Calcutta High Court,—and from above half a dozen stalwarts asking to be recommended for the Law Mem-

ber's place he had vacated! When I told him that I made, with a sense of 'malice without bitterness,' a separate file of all such letters, he laughed heartily, and raising his finger, he said with a sense of pride: "My dear Iswara Dutt, let me tell you that never in my life have I written a single letter to anyone asking for something for myself." It was so true of the man who grinded many axes in life but never his own. Incidentally, it is interesting to recall that the suggestion for making him a P. C. came straight from King George V!

Where is another man with his sense of extreme rectitude? He would not allow his own son who was in the I.C.S. to live under his roof lest it should compromise his own position as a public man. And I knew of none more secular-minded in our ranks. For the 1941 census he was approached with a form to be filled in, and when he was formally asked about his nationality, he said, "Indian." "What community, Sir," the official asked. "I refuse to mention the community. I say, I am an Indian. Let your Government prosecute me, if it can, for refusing to mention anything about the community."

Beneath his stern exterior lay a heart soft as butter. Amidst affluence he was extremely simple. In his enormous house he seldom stepped out of his own room where he worked and received people, ate and slept. He loved good books and good company. He could laugh heartily and make others too laugh by narrating to them splendid anecdotes while consuming tobacco in every form for, he smoked both cigarettes and cigars with a pipe in between and the nabobic hookah before retiring. His mind, however, essentially dwelt in the remote Past when civilisation reclined for a while on the peaks of Hellas and he often said that human thought has not advanced beyond the days of Plato.

About this spacious personality too I can go on writing to my heart's content but must reluctantly stop owing to exigencies of space—and perhaps wait till *Swatantra* brings out its next Annual, provided its readers are interested in such recollections and the irresistible Editor draws me out again.

# WHERE ARE WE GOING

FOR the third time in the memory of men yet living the civilised world is engaging in a race between social crisis and world war. The alternatives with which the competition in armaments between the great powers presents mankind were clearly perceived during the first arms race by the then Liberal Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey. As long ago as 1912 he pointed out in a speech that:

"If this tremendous expenditure on armaments goes on it must, in the long run, break down civilisation. You are having this great burden of force piled up in times of peace, and if it goes on increasing by leaps and bounds as it has done in the last generation, in time it will become intolerable. There are those who think it will lead to war, precisely because it is becoming intolerable. I think it is much more likely the burden will be dissipated by internal revolution—not by nations fighting against each other, but by the revolt of masses of men against taxation."

In those days the arms race was a trifle compared to what it is today, both in the proportion of the national income it consumed and in its potential effects in destruction and death. Whereas in 1912 the only perceptible social issue was the amount to be paid in taxes, today the arms race is boosting the cost of living and imposing burdens on the limping economies of States half ruined by the last war that threaten to lower the standard of living of the masses of Western Europe and Britain below the danger point.

The overhauling of statecraft and the study of what had brought on the

catastrophe that went on after the first war clearly revealed the connection between the social order based on private profit-making interests in sovereign States and the scramble for markets, the arms race and the balance of power. The carving up of most of the non-white world during the last quarter of the last century between a handful of powers was the ultimate development of the economic system based on private profit-making enterprise, given the fact that it had a vested historic interest in international anarchy.

From about the middle of the nineteenth century capitalism began to pass from the stage of small freely competing economic entities to that of large-scale economic and financial combines, monopolies, trusts, rings, cartels, trade associations, holding companies, etc., dominated in the last analysis by a few giant banks. Whereas the small entities were predominantly in the hands of socially humble and politically radical business men who distrusted the State and wanted to wrest power from the land-owning oligarchy that was still the backbone of the ruling class, the emergence of finance and monopoly capitalism was accompanied by the rise of business and banking magnates, who intermarried with the old aristocracy, bought land and in other ways amalgamated with them to form a new ruling class based on the power of money (plutocracy).

It was these later developments that led directly to the outburst of imperialism in the last third of the

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last century. Advanced industrial nations were no longer interested only in trade, but more and more in investment, which meant the development of backward countries and was accompanied by political control, the establishment of sovereignty, the building of strategic bases, etc.

As the "vacant" spaces were preempted and expansion became more difficult and hazardous, the rivalries between the imperialist powers became acuter and the arms race itself became a method of keeping up the profits of heavy industry. Armaments were the only form of public works in unplanned private enterprise economies that did not run counter to any vested capitalist interest and stimulated trade because supply created demand, i.e., the more one State armed the more the others felt that they had to arm, thus creating a vicious circle—but a profitable one for large sections of capitalist economy.

This process ended in the war of 1914-18. At the end of it the lesson to be drawn seemed crystal clear to the overwhelming majority of statesmen and public opinion in all countries. It was formulated as follows by Sir Edward (later Lord) Grey in his memoirs, *Twenty-Five Years*:

"The moral is obvious; it is that great armaments lead inevitably to war. If there are armaments on one side, there must be armaments on the other sides....

"The increase of armaments, that is intended in each nation to produce consciousness of strength, and a sense of security, does not produce these effects. On the contrary, it produces a consciousness of the strength of other nations and a sense of fear. Fear begets suspicion and distrust and evil imaginings of all sorts.... The enormous growth of armaments in Europe, the sense of insecurity and fear caused by them—it was these that made war inevitable. This, it seems to me, is the truest reading of history, and the lesson that the present should be learning from the past in the interests of future peace, the warning to be handed on to those who come after us."

A new issue emerged after the war and the Russian Revolution: the struggle between those who wished to preserve the old social order in its essentials and those who believed there must be fundamental social

change, substituting a collectivist for a private profit-making economic system. Ever since the end of the first world war this issue has been in the forefront of domestic and international politics alike. It has dominated public life and underlies nearly all the issues and questions that have vexed statesmen and excited public interest since 1917.

After the first world war politicians of the West on the one hand produced the League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation as a sop to the "moderate" Left, and on the other embarked on a policy of blood and iron to crush the forces of social revolution. The League of Nations was supposed to substitute the idea of establishing a system of world government based on the assumption that the common interests of nations were more important than anything that divided them for the balance of power, based on the idea that the vital interests of sovereign States are mutually incompatible and one's gain is the other's loss. The attempt to crush "communism", meaning thereby any serious threat to the old social order, took the form both of direct intervention, as in Russia, and indirect, as in Europe, through control of food supplies to starving populations and the use of military occupations in enemy countries, backed by diplomatic threats and bribes and the formation of a Western Union (Locarno).

These policies defeated social revolution in Europe—at the cost of enthroning Mussolini, Hitler and a score of lesser counter-revolutionary, authoritarian regimes covering Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The intransigence and aggressiveness of the Fascist States confounded the efforts of Western Conservatism to form a common front with them against Communism and the Soviet Union. This was the policy of pro-Fascist appeasement, which was simply anti-Communist intervention continued by other means. Nor were the attempts of Western Conservative Governments to divide the Fascist camp by bribing Mussolini with Abyssinia (and later the Spanish Republic) to join the Western democracies against Hitler any more successful. These policies ended by producing, not democracy

and peace, but Fascism and the second world war, in which the Western powers saved themselves from defeat only by accepting the help of the much hated Soviet Union and which ended by spreading the social revolution over half Europe and the whole of China, in worse forms and at an incalculably higher cost in human suffering and damage to civilisation than would have been the case if the Western Powers had refrained from counter-revolutionary intervention after the first world war.

Throughout the period between the wars the main motive governing foreign policy was fear and hatred of the social revolution. Rearmament on a far vaster scale than in the first arms race became the mainstay of capitalism in distress after the greatest slump in history, which marked a turning point in the economic development of the world.

The moral of the second arms race was drawn by what today would be regarded by most Conservatives as an unanswerable authority, namely, Mr. Churchill speaking in the House of Commons on April 23 1936:

"I cannot believe that, after armaments in all countries have reached a towering height, they will settle down and continue at a hideous level far above the present level, which is already crushing, and that that will be for many years a normal feature of the world's routine. Whatever happens, I do not believe that will. Europe is approaching a climax.... Either there will be a melting of hearts and a joining of hands between great nations, which will set out upon realising the glorious age of prosperity and freedom which is now within the grasp of the millions of toiling people, or there will be an explosion and a catastrophe the course of which no imagination can measure, and beyond which no human eye can see."

During the twenty years between the wars Labour emerged as H.M.'s Opposition and the alternative Government, was in office for two brief periods and took a line in foreign policy consonant with the interests of the working class it represented, that brought it into frequent conflict with Conservative Governments: Labour opposed the Versailles Treaty; helped to defeat counter-revolutionary intervention in Russia by organising for and threatening a General Strike; recognised and resumed diplomatic

relations and concluded a trade treaty with the Soviet Union; condemned the appeasement of Fascism and the hypocrisy of "non-intervention" against the Fascist-Nazi war of aggression in Spain; and demanded an alliance with the Soviet Union within the League of Nations to call a halt to the advance of Fascist aggression. But the Labour Party was not clear-headed and determined in advocating these policies. It generally acted on the principle of "too late and too little" and was confused and half-hearted. Its Right wing leaders were always trying to toe the line of the Tories and being defeated by the strength of the Left within the Party. But by and large, it did mildly oppose most of the worst errors of Tory foreign policy and put forward an alternative.

Mr. Attlee, then as now the leader of the Labour Party in Parliament, in his book *The Labour Party in Perspective* published in 1937 (and republished in January 1949) drew the conclusion that:

"It must be perfectly clear that the Labour Party rejects altogether the theory that foreign policy is something which must be kept out of party politics. It does not agree that there is some policy to be pursued by this country irrespective of what party is in power, a policy which is national and so transcends party differences. There is a deep difference of opinion between the Labour Party and the capitalist parties on foreign as well as on home policy, because the two cannot be separated. The foreign policy of a Government is the reflection of its internal policy. Imperialism is the form which capitalism takes in relation to other countries."

When Tory policy duly ended in the second world war which it did so much to make inevitable, there was a strong revulsion of feeling against Tory misrule and the miseries of mass unemployment that swept Labour into power in 1945 with a huge majority and a clear mandate to make a fresh start at home and peace abroad. In the mean time, however, Mr. Churchill, under cover of the war, had resumed the anti-Communist and anti-Soviet policies which had brought us to disaster last time: we now know from Mr. Harold Macmillan's quotation of a secret Cabinet memorandum to the European

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Assembly at Strasbourg a couple of years ago, that Mr. Churchill as early as 1942 was writing that the main task at the end of the war would be halt what he called the "advance of Russian barbarism," in other words, to stop the spread of social revolution, to defeat and overthrow Fascism, which is capitalist counter-revolution, without damaging the social order.

This meant preventing the Resistance movements, based on the working class wholly or partly under Communist leadership and putting forward sweeping programmes of social change and reform, from seizing power when the Fascist and Quisling regimes collapsed. The old weapons of Allied military occupations, control of food supplies, diplomatic threats and promises and even direct or indirect military intervention, as in Greece, Indo-China, China and Korea, were used to put reactionaries and even collaborators, Fascists and war criminals back into the saddle to defeat those who fought on our side during the war, and to back the Right against the Left in civil wars. All this was done under a variety of pretexts remarkably like those used to justify similar policies after the first world war. Other elements in this policy were the new Western Union and pro-Fascist appeasement, including the rearmament of Germany and Japan and bringing in Franco through the back door into the family of free nations, let alone including the East Mediterranean and Middle East powers; Turkey and Greece, in a North Atlantic Treaty—to be followed, one must assume on the same analogy, by bringing Japan into the Western Union.

The world has reverted to the balance of power and an arms race on a scale so costly and deadly as to dwarf the two previous races. The parallels with what happened last time are striking, with Britain taking the place of France after the first world war and the U. S. the place of Britain as the leader of the counter-revolutionary coalition pitted against revolutionary Russia and her associates.

These developments would have been less likely and would have nothing like their present support in

the West if it were not for the disquieting developments in the Soviet Union: partly due to its own backwardness, partly to the material and political strains imposed by isolation in a hostile capitalist world, the Russian Revolution, instead of ending the inevitable initial stage of dictatorship, has perpetuated and aggravated that stage and perverted the Socialist equalitarian international outlook of the early revolutionaries into something remarkably like great Russian nationalism and imperialism, using Communist Parties and the fanatical faith of Communists in other countries for its own power political purposes. Just as the Comintern and after it the Cominform have twisted proletarian internationalism to mean subservience to the Politbureau of the C. C. of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, so Marx's, Engels', Lenin's and Stalin's teachings about the equality of nations and the right of self-determination have been perverted into theoretical justification for the Russians acting as the "leading nation" within the Soviet Union and dominating and exploiting the U.S.S.R.'s weaker neighbours.

Nevertheless history since 1945 would have been very different if the Labour Party had stuck to its Socialist outlook and its election pledges in the field of foreign affairs and defence, instead of being made prisoners of the Foreign Office and the fighting services and blindly continuing the foreign policy they inherited from Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden in the wartime Coalition. The balance of power, the arms race and the cold war against Communism if continued long enough will inevitably produce Fascism and another world war as they did last time.

Just as military men, it is often said, prepare for the last war so politicians prepare for the last peace: having failed to secure peace by appeasing Fascism they reason that this time they must make peace by adopting policies which they believe would have saved peace if they had been applied against Hitler. And so, in order to win the peace after the second world war they have gone back to the balance of power and the arms race that landed us in the first world war and have ended in war every time they have been tried.

It was a Roman general—hardly a good authority on peace—who coined the disastrously silly saying “If you want peace prepare for war.” Mankind has gone on living up to that saying ever since, through innumerable wars. To have peace it is necessary to have a policy as well as to rearm. Arms may be necessary, at least for a time, but arms without policy or with a foolish policy mean war not peace. Whereas both the first and the second arms races in living memory ended in world wars in the nick of time to avert a major economic crisis, this time there is good hope of the economic cost of the arms race producing a revolt in the masses like that suggested by Sir Edward Grey in 1912, and of that revolt inducing a change of heart in statesmen in the sense of Mr. Churchill’s speech in 1936, before the third arms race precipitates the third world war.

The Labour Party grew up slowly between the wars in home affairs: it cut its milk teeth soon after it emerged from the womb of the Liberal Party in 1906 on trade union rights, local government and social legislation. It cut its wisdom teeth, a proverbially painful process, on questions of finance, economic organisation, production, full employment, etc., at the price of betrayal by its leaders, crisis and defeat in 1931. It showed in 1945 that it had not yet grown up in world affairs and was content to be run by the permanent officials and its Right wing leaders and remain in bondage to the Tories on foreign policy and defence.

Now, when the workers are asked to foot the bill for their leaders’ policy of coalition in foreign affairs and defence with Mr. Churchill ever since 1945, they are beginning to jib: they refuse to forgo wage claims while prices and profits rise and to suffer the social services to be devaluated in order to pay for rearmament. If, as seems likely, they also lose the election, they are going to begin to hunt for those responsible for their failures and troubles and to turn to those in the party who have clear and confident answers to the Tory argument that the arms race is the way to peace and that Britain must

not try to take her own line in world affairs but should, in Mr. Churchill’s words, “stick to the United States at any cost.” The revolt in the trade unions against the Government’s policy on freezing wages, the break-away of the Bevan group and its line on rearmament and the American alliance, are straws showing which way the wind is blowing. It is likely to blow harder in that direction after the election. It may blow away some of the old leaders and blow into their place more radical elements in the Party, including Mr. Bevan and his friends.

Not least of the merits of the latter are that they recognise the vast importance of the gathering revolt in the peoples of Asia and Africa against inferior political status and pitifully low standards of living. If, as a British economist recently remarked, the 1,000 millions of the non-white world take the revolutionary idea into their heads that they should have enough to eat, the face of world politics will be transformed. Another new factor whose importance in the present situation is recognised by the Bevan group is Yugoslavia’s stand in world affairs. It raises issues that go to the root of the cold war. It could be used by the Western powers to demonstrate that they themselves are ready for and to test whether the Soviet Government are willing to accept a live and let live agreement between the Western powers and the Cominform States, based on mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and political independence, and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.

The Left in England look to India and Yugoslavia, who have both stood aloof from American alliances and commitments as allies in the fight for sanity and believe that together with the Asian nations, and with Scandinavia and Western Europe following a British lead, as they undoubtedly would in the end, it would be possible to put forward and press for policies of compromise and conciliation that would enable the two great armed camps to come to terms and thus deliver mankind from the nightmare of another world war.

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# A BRITISH IMPRESSION

OF

## *Acharya Kripalani*

By VERA BRITTAIN

TO those British people who know and respect the Indian Republic and have some slight knowledge of New Delhi, the news that Acharya J. B. Kripalani had founded an Opposition Party appeared as a fresh gleam of hope irradiating the complex Indian landscape.

This feeling of appreciation implies no impertinent criticism of Congress and much less of Mr. Nehru, whose courage, vision, and unlimited capacity for hard work I personally have admired for many years. But judging from the somewhat truncated accounts of Indian politics which appear in the British Press, it seems to me that during the past few months Mr. Nehru has stood increasingly to the Left of Congress, and may welcome an Opposition still further to the Left which will tackle the reactionary elements and thus make his own moderate policy more feasible.

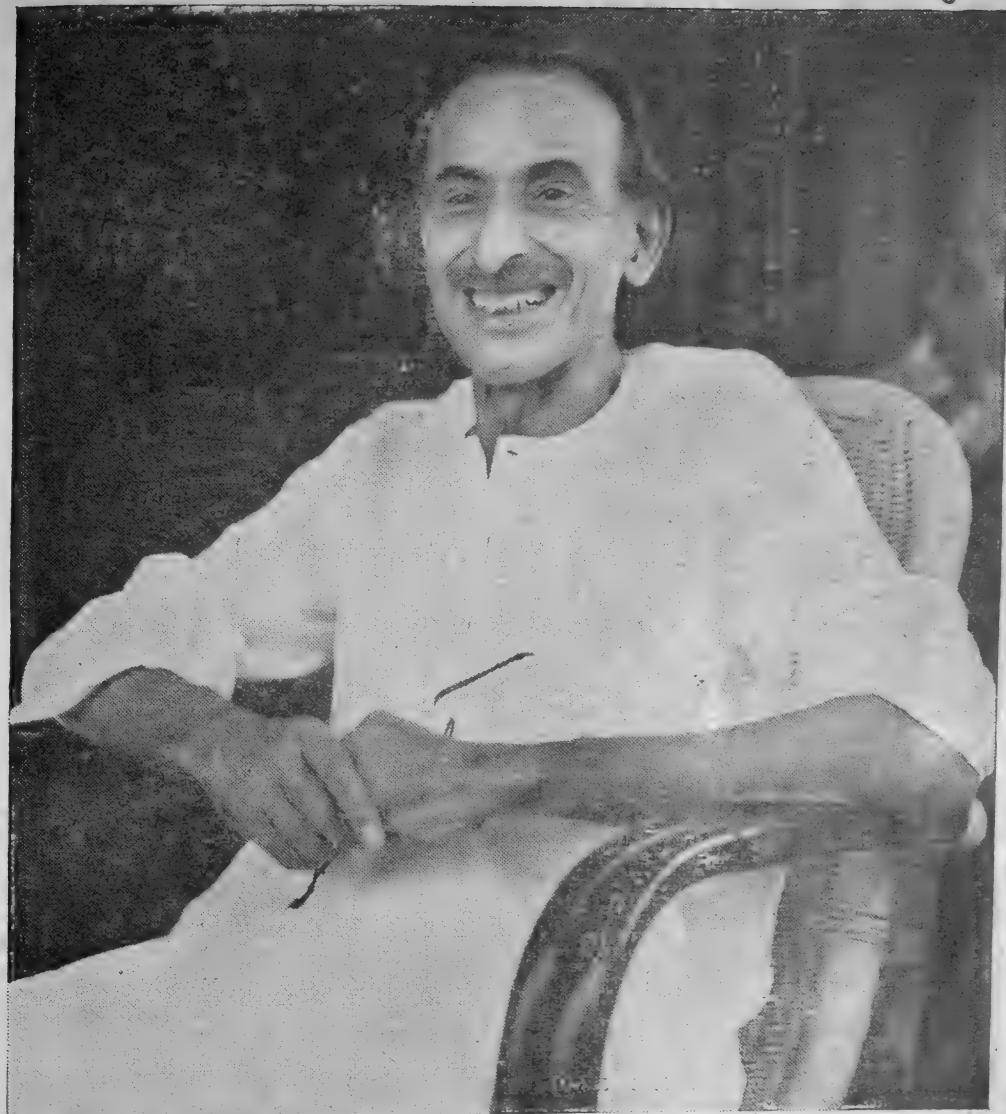
A democratic country such as the new Indian Republic, seems likely to develop politically on lines comparable to those of British democracy, which is never at its best without a strong Opposition. Our characteristic contribution to world

politics loses its vigour when we have to function, as in wartime, under a National Government, or have a strong Third Party such as we possessed between the Wars when the Socialist, Liberal, and Conservative parties each possessed its Shadow Cabinet. For this reason I welcome the new Praja Party and the initiative of its founder.

I first met Acharya J. B. Kripalani at Santiniketan, where I was staying in December, 1949, as a British delegate to the World Pacifist Meeting and a member of its Press and Publicity Committee. The Conference had opened with a long, pious, and wholly uncritical discussion of Mahatma Gandhi's Constructive Programme; into these solemn theoretic deliberations Acharya Kripalani blew like a gust of fresh air from the winter climate of Delhi. Even before he began to speak, his personality and appearance had impressed us. Tall, lithe and dynamic, he suggested a poseur who enjoyed his poses and wasted no time on pointless repentance. Wearing a long coloured sash and a shawl flung negligently over his shoulder, he appeared to be a strange



Vera Brittain



Acharya Kripalani

fusion of a Renaissance character imported from Europe with a highly conscious, intellectual Hindu.

Regarding the seekers after wisdom with ironical amusement, he dispelled by his first words the heavy atmosphere of devotion. Describing his association for thirty years with Gandhi "before he became a Mahatma", he replaced the plaster saint of international worship with a living man, vital owing to his share of the faults and inconsistencies which belong to common humanity.

"I always irritated him," he told us frankly, "but I joined him because he was fearless and shameless. I

admired him for withstanding ridicule and not caring what others said. In the end I came to be intellectually converted to his theory of non-violence, but never emotionally. In my opinion he was not a pacifist, because he regarded fear as a greater evil than violence. When he started the Satyagraha movement, he began by taking fear from people's hearts."

At a hurricane of questions, healthy and invigorating, greeted Acharya Kripalani's sane analysis of Gandhi's philosophy. He ended by urging us not to try to imitate Gandhi; "genius is self-regulating and often breaks its own laws. You must learn to deal

with your situations in your own way."

Later, during a week in Delhi, I saw a good deal more of Acharya Kripalani. Twice I spoke at receptions which he gave at his house for the Conference delegates then in the city. On another occasion he was my fellow-guest at a luncheon given in the Parliament dining-room by Mrs. Renuka Ray after a debate on the Hindu Code Bill. Before the luncheon began he procured me a printed copy of the Bill and explained its complexities, so reminiscent of the long battle for domestic rights and freedoms fought by British women during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Finally, it was Acharya Kripalani who became responsible for the fact that I was, I believe, the first British woman to address Members of the Legislative Assembly. At a reception for the Conference delegates in the Council of State Chamber, J. B. Kripalani acted as host. I arrived late to find another British delegate on his feet, and knowing how much the representatives of other countries wanted to speak in that historic place, I tried to lose myself in the crowd when one or two women Members endeavoured to push me forward. But Acharya Kripalani's keen eyes, which appear to be endowed with an unusual capacity for satirical perception, observed this by-play. Though he looked amused as always, he summoned me to the rostrum with the authoritative gesture of one accustomed to be obeyed.

Perhaps my most moving experience in Delhi was a visit with Professor Amiya Chakravarty to the place of Gandhi's assassination. Standing beside the small concrete slab, half hidden by a fading heap of African marigolds which a succession of devotees had laid there as though it were a tomb, I sought to construct a true picture of the Mahatma from the many accounts of his life and work that I had heard during my weeks in India and before.

Among these descriptions, two

predominated. Besides the sombre poetry of Mr. Nehru's threnody, broadcast to the world immediately after the assassination, I set Acharya Kripalani's uncompromising portrait of Gandhi the man. And there, in the millionaire's garden where he had so incongruously received his death-blow, I tried to combine and yet to distinguish the two portraits—the Father and Leader of the Prime Minister's eloquence, who was already qualifying in the eyes of the worshiping millions for a highrank among India's many gods; and the shrewd unpoetic politician, with his proletarian wit and the unashamed inconsistencies of a practical pioneer.

As I travelled from Delhi to Sevagram, I wished that Acharya Kripalani had a more responsible position in the Indian Government. But I had learned by then that a widening gulf lay between Gandhi's spiritual teaching and the Congress policy; how hardly, it seemed, could the leaders of a people remain the followers of a saint! In such a period of conflict, each disciple of Gandhi had to make his own difficult decision in relation to the moral struggle of which Delhi had become the centre.

The decision which Acharya Kripalani has now made is deeply significant—for himself, for the Government, and for the future of India. His position is potentially as powerful, though totally dissimilar in outlook and values, as that played by the Leader of the Opposition in England to-day. The Praja Party is still, I imagine, quite small; it may be years before India attains to such a balance of parties as we know in Britain. Such an embarrassingly close balance is, of course, unnecessary to the working of a successful Opposition, which besides offering an alternative Government, has incessantly to act as a goad and a foil to the politicians in power.

I can think of no Indian statesman better fitted to play the part of inspired gadfly than Acharya Kripalani.

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*The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man  
who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to  
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# THE DANGERS

## OF PLANNING

By "VISWAMITRA"

THERE is such a thing as being planned against rather than planning; which is what is happening at the present time to a world too weary to stand up and shake its fists. Until some one with great authority and mental vision sets on foot a movement for real freedom, and this time at a world level, there exists the live danger that in a few years' time some one in power will know for certain what is good for everybody and will start to plan accordingly.

The "planned society" is not a new concept. The Greeks evolved a planned society. It relegated the tasks of manual labour to slaves—non Greeks who were just good enough for such tasks. The Romans planned a life of plenty on a colonial foundation—later on copied by Britain. Medieval Europe was a superb example of a planned society. God gave a certain niche to each person, and it was his duty to work hard within that sphere, and not dare question the Supreme Plan by which, under the protecting umbrella of the church there were lords, serfs, craftsmen, priests, each fulfilling a function without protest. Ancient India planned a society with four castes, each with a predetermined function, with non-aryans outside the pale and a king who held the scales even on the advice of his ministers. In fact no civilization has functioned without a plan. The variable factors have been the objectives of the plan and the agency of execution.

Like all other human institutions, when an idea gathers adherents, develops a school of thought and

becomes a creed, it brings out a Book of Words and builds a church—and obedience is exalted. Otherwise wars would not have been fought and men burnt at the stake for doctrinal reasons. When ideas are crystallised into ideologies they cease to be dynamic and the decay of all good movements can be traced to the period of their establishment as creeds. Fortunately, some men rebel against restraint under any conditions, and their incipient heterodoxies have saved the world from becoming a paradise. Thus with Vedic Brahmanism and early Budhism, late Budhism and the Hindu revival, Roman Catholic domination and the Reformation, political democracy and labour, Socialism and Communism, *laissez faire* and planning. Time converts the remedy into a disease. It is significant that the early years of such rebellion against established authority and the evils inherent in it, have brought out the best in men—sacrifice, courage, adventure, leadership, poetry, and the savour of a new and better life. Historians find material in plenty in these periods, and not in the comfortable centuries, the Dark Ages when men had food and an established church but were burnt in public if they said that the earth went round the sun.

These reflections are relevant in relation to the "planned society" and the Welfare State that have become the commonplace of political thought during recent years. The primary danger in planning for others is that it soon becomes an aspect of political power, and tends, in a democracy, to become a competition between parties

as to which promises more. It corrupts the giver by adding to his sphere of interference, and it corrupts the recipient by destroying his self-reliance. The downfall of the Roman Empire can be traced to this precise cause. Further, in a planned society the human body is reverenced, and the human mind is drilled into contentment. There is something almost grotesque in a whole community wearing the same kind of spectacles and false teeth, as in England. Logically, the process should extend to women wearing standard clothes and shoes, and whole families sitting down to standard food, listening during meals, to a people's radio available to all citizens. This is not a caricature, but the consummation that Welfare States are devoutly wishing for.

Even where the theory of a plan is sound, as, for instance, in establishing a priority between various uses of essential material, the fact that the incidental controls have to be worked through the agency of Government introduces elements of inefficiency, corruption and blackmarketing that ultimately defeat the object of the plan in a direct way by enabling the resourceful to still get away with what they want; and this, apart from the demoralisation that characterises a society where transgressions of the law come to be considered as unfortunate but inevitable, like buying black-market rice for one's daughter's marriage. As long as a plan means control, and one sees no other way of enforcing a plan, its evils are greater than its good.

Planning is also dangerous as an economic aspect of patriotism. If a country lacks oil or coal, an intelligent national plan logically leads to the control of such materials in other countries. It may begin with international barter, but plans are made to suit crises, and cannot for long escape the desire to impose some form of control.

So also with the theory of "self sufficiency." Very few, if any, plans, have escaped the allurements of this concept. It leads to a great deal of arithmetic about existing demands, and future demands, and as happened not long ago in respect of cloth, stocks accumulate and a more pragmatic approach is dictated by the force of

immediate circumstances, because, while the cloth may be there the credit structure cannot be so easily altered to suit the new demands of the large number of dealers between the producer and the consumer; nor can the consumer command the money to buy what is strictly necessary for him. Such a plan can succeed only if cloth is given away and not sold.

The questions that one has to ask oneself at the present time thus involve first principles, such as the theory of the State in relation to the individual, and the extent of individual freedom that society can afford to concede. The reaction against a mere Police State and the accumulation of individual fortunes is just and fair, but if the remedy lies in State planning all along the line, then the accompanying loss of freedom and the interference with individual living are colossal debits. Nothing that the imagination of man is capable of can flourish in an atmosphere of dull contentment and he will lose his heritage and become a well-fed baby if he allows the State to plan his life. His mind, if one may coin a phrase, will be "tin-soldiered." One may seriously consider the desirability of exchanging a certain degree of squalor and misery for this era of "minimum-plenty."

This is the note of warning that one must heed lest planning become a cult and a doctrine. The fact that most people think in terms of a five year plan is sufficient to show that except under the stress of severe and urgent personal interest, the human mind does not question the hypothesis of a doctrine. Why five years? The world does not start again at the beginning of the sixth year. Thus with all else. The State should guarantee opportunities and not hand over goods. Otherwise we would have failed to learn the lessons of the past summarised by Acton in the statement that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is not a merely clever half truth, but a painful fact, and the best of democracies has been powerless against the grooves that authority fashions and follows with the best of intentions, doubtless, but, like well intentioned parents, anxious for the children to be happy, but only in the manner that they, the parents, conceive to be correct.





# among the chinese

By JAYA APPASAMY

ARRIVING in a new country is like a plunge into the dark. One is afraid of the unknown but more than afraid, alert, aware, tense. Every pore is awake and inhales sensations, smells, feelings, while the core of the being offers resistance to the new situation. One is like a fish transferred to a new pool. The Chineseness of China is not confined to her arts or literature, it is everywhere, in the contours of the land, in the attitudes of people and the ways they have evolved, in the toys and the cares and tears of the four hundred million. Confucius, Laotse and the rest of them grew out of this soil and breathed this air

and the things they said were so apt, so meaningful, they are indeed what most Chinese would ordinarily think. Today, the Chinese civilisation is more than four thousand years old; yet it is perennially young; full of the wisdom of age, the humour, the candour, the confidence of youth. The people who are the living representatives of this ancient culture are in one of their periodic struggles to reorient themselves. The immensity of the struggle, the immensity of their heritage, the temperament of the Chinese and their capacity for survival all fascinate the stranger. Today a new China emerges from the tur-



Jaya Appasamy

linger in art exhibitions? In China they do. Are labourers seen with flowers, enjoying them with unconcealed wonder? In the autumn in Peking one finds crowds of people of every description setting out for the Western Hills, a distance of about ten miles, merely to see the gold and orange glory of autumn trees. Or in the summer one might see happy holiday makers wandering in the imperial parks enjoying the newly blossomed peonies—celebrated in Chinese connoisseurship nearly a thousand years. The poor man does not forget to keep for his amusement crickets in little grass baskets or gold fish in a bowl. These to him are not at all essential, they only show that there is an affection for nature and a sense of wonder in him, an attitude of friendliness to the great natural world rather than of triumph.

Among the pleasures cultivated by the Chinese, the most realistic and popular must certainly be the enjoyment of food. Cooking is an acknowledged art and the existence and popularity of Chinese food all over the world is shown by the distribution of Chinese restaurants. The Chinese are a people with the 'restaurant habit.' One hears of and sees eating houses and taverns famous in history and even today the Peking gourmet enjoys a celebrated dish in season and out, at the many well known restaurants. Monasteries are among the houses which harbour famous cooks, known for their fine inventions in vegetables. With a combination of imagination and common sense the Chinese know how to handle practically every form of edible animal and plant life. These they cook, stopping at the right moment. Foods don't lose their identity or flavour, other flavours are combined, not superimposed, and vegetables retain not only flavour and taste but texture; many of them are served crunchy. With their love of connoisseurship, the Chinese dinner, properly speaking, is a tasting of foods. Usually, a formal dinner consists of a minimum of twelve courses. These are served one after the other, each dish is complete in itself. The coming dish is cooked while the guests dally over the previous one. The food is usually finely cut, one picks up a piece or two with chopsticks, tastes,

pauses, converses or tastes some more. Soon the dish is cleared away and the next one arrives. Wine is served ordinarily in minute wine cups. It is served warm and at a toast the guests are expected to "drain the cup". With their flair for reasonableness, the Chinese rarely get drunk. I have never seen a Chinese drunk under the table, not even at drinking games. The zest for wine is tempered by the middle way.

Of all the influences on Chinese life nothing is deeper than that of the family. The family unit or even the joint family is a major factor, a factor that is at once the strength, sometimes the weakness of society. The Chinese do not easily form clubs or institutions. They are not usually interested in collective activity like sports or social welfare or debates. They live mainly in their homes or with their friends in tightly-knit loyal units. The joint family is not only the earliest but also probably the only social unit children are conscious of. Within the walls of the home, children learn easily lessons in obligations, adjustment, self-control, courtesy, gratitude and reverence for the aged. Chinese children seem to us unusually well-behaved. Family pride and family honour are enhanced by ancestor worship, so that everybody has a sense of belonging somewhere, of being in line, may be even of being immortal. But these same walls also tend to give the child too much security, a lack of independence, a lack of initiative and enterprise. Family



Pedlar selling gold fish

loyalty sometimes develops at the expense of civic virtues, people are seen sometimes to throw the rubbish from their homes into the street or pretend there are no obligations towards the stranger. It is quite common for foreigners to feel left out, to be mere spectators until the threshold of friendliness is crossed and the friend taken into the family affection. The little community within the home all labour for the common good. The aged receive the greatest respect and the greatest care. Old age is a gracious and honourable time of life in China and nobody pretends to be younger than they are. Servants are quite usual and are generally treated well, often even as members of the household. Generally, they are honest and loyal and stay with the same family almost all their lives.

Women reach their maximum power when they rule the home as mothers-in-law. For the most part, they work hard. It is to their credit that there is hardly any waste in a Chinese home. The ordinary Chinese woman knows how to make summer and winter clothes, to knit woollens, to make shoes, to preserve or pickle meats and vegetables, to cook, to launder, she knows simple remedies for ailments and the care of children. Often she also knows the finer arts of embroidery, painting and so on. In these days of transition and upheaval it is quite common to see women earning their living as well as caring for their households. The wars and the moving of peoples have dislocated numberless families and made the woman come out of their seclusion and fend for themselves. But in spite of their talents and good sense, it would seem that the honour they enjoy is not yet what they deserve. It is ingrained in the Chinese mind that women are not only different from men—they are inferior. The Book of Poetry, an anthology more than 2,000 years old, contains the passage, "When a baby boy was born, he was laid on the bed and given jade to play with and when a baby girl was born, she was laid on the floor and given a tile to play with." Confucius emphasized the necessity for the seclusion of women and the inequality was further stressed by a sharp division of duties and the cultivation of virtues emphasising the

womanliness of women. A woman in those days had to be everything that was desirable from a man's point of view. Is it any wonder that the poetess Fu Hsuan breaks out with the terrible cry:

*"How sad it is to be framed in woman's form!"*

*"Nothing on earth is held so cheap."*

Within the home, however, women probably enjoyed and still enjoy a certain dignity and power. The height of grandeur is generally reached by the dowager or mother-in-law who is often an example of graciousness, efficiency and autocracy. The daughters-in-law are obliged to wait until that day when they also attain such an enviable position. But in the world beyond the home, to this day, even exceptionally talented women seem not to enjoy the respect or place that is their due. I have sometimes heard of them being referred to as eccentricities.

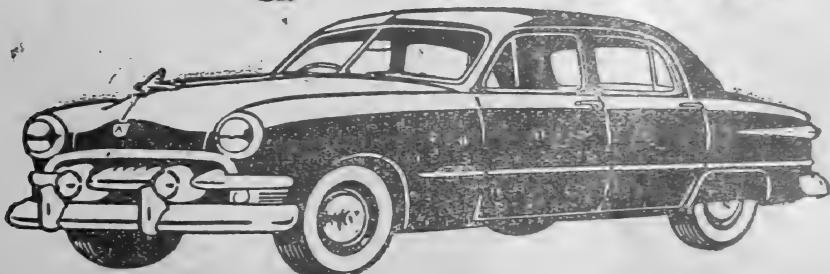
Linked up with the former seclusion of women and the fact that few women went out shopping is the phenomenon of trade coming to the doors of the home. One may buy anything, staying at home, from rare books to children's toys, from fans to flowering plants. An endless stream of pedlars pass by on the streets each twanging or sounding an instrument peculiar to his trade. It is easy to identify the sounds and somebody from the house runs to the gate to call in the oil-seller, the mender of pans, or the seller of winter persimmons. Each season and each festival brings its own toys and sweets for the children, fantastic mask-faced kites with rampant tails, sugared cherries threaded on sticks, or paper fish-lanterns with luminous eyes and fins that stir in the wind.

In the Chinese home, the garden is just as important as the house—sometimes indeed more important. In well-to-do homes the gardens are large and are the care and creation of the master of the house. A Chinese garden is a garden to live in—it is beautiful in all seasons. Gardening takes its inspiration from landscape; it is carefully planned, yet seems casual; formal, yet informal. The house is a meandering group of rooms generally arranged around a succes-

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sion of courtyards. The courtyards are wells of light,—often there is place in them for rocks, pools and plants. The rooms are generally lit from the side facing the courtyard by papered windows. There is no cross ventilation and no second storey. The roofs form a grey sea—moving in wave-like undulations from crest to crest.

Most of the year is cold. In the bitterly cold winter months the family gathers around the stoves fed by coal. In poor farm houses there is a huge brick bed, hollow beneath where fires are lit. The whole family sleeps on the one bed wrapped in eider downs. Chinese winter clothes are ideal for fighting the cold. In the Northern cities where the "cutting-face wind" blows from the North-western deserts nothing is more comfortable or warm than cotton-padded clothes (gowns and trousers) cotton padded shoes, fur caps and gloves. The Chinese line their clothes with fur on the inside. Fur is not expensive. Even peasants have gowns lined with sheep's fur and fur-lined caps to keep their ears warm. Hands are well tucked into long sleeves and the feet protected with socks, tied up trouser ends and cotton-padded shces.

The Chinése have an infinite respect for learning. The officials of the imperial dynasties were, since the Tang period (tenth century) selected from those who passed the public examinations so that there is established an aristocracy of lettered men rather than of blue blooded nobles. Anybody might appear for the imperial examinations, permitting an equality of opportunity for all. Numberless legends abound about poor students or the sons of peasants who by their application and perseverance attained to positions of power. There is a veneration among all classes of people not only for scholars but for the written word. Even today one may see men on the streets collecting in baskets fragments of paper with writing on them. These are solemnly burnt at temples as a way of acquiring merit.

Parallel with the reverence for writing is the development of the art of calligraphy. The Chinese write with a soft brush and an ink made of pine soot. The ink is like a cake and is rubbed on a stone slab with a little water. The brush is dipped into

it and used on a porous paper. Calligraphy in China is a very advanced abstract art, the practice of which trains the eyes of the entire people to the understanding of arrangement, rhythm, vitality and so on. Is it not wonderful that in the country where printing was first invented, the people have not lost their feeling for the beauty of the written character? To this day bills, documents and shop signs are still written with the brush as are, of course, personal letters and poems.

The Chinese written character consists of a well-knit shape of a number of strokes. Each character is a mono-syllabic word with a phonetic sound as well as a tone. In order to read a newspaper a student would have to memorise the shapes and sounds of about two thousand characters. It sharpens the visual memory but on the whole is a hard barrier to the illiterate. The present Government is, I believe, trying to simplify the language. On the streets one may ordinarily see professional scribes or letter-writers writing letters for the peasants. Though the Chinese of the different provinces speak many different dialects the sounds of which are often mutually unintelligible, the written language is one. This is one of the very important factors in the homogeneity of Chinese culture and one of the greatest assets of any Government. Cantonese and the people of the extreme Western provinces like those of Shanghai or Shantung can read with ease the newspapers and literature of Peking. The characters are the same everywhere. It is only the pronunciation that differs.

Another characteristic in the Chinese pattern which influences both public and private life is the necessity for "face". Face is something akin to honour. To lose face for a Chinese is the same as being insulted and is based on the very human desire not to admit a mistake. It is necessary in every quarrel to preserve face. The difficulties of compromise are most often overcome by the introduction of the third man, who in polite language brings the parties to a compromise. I remember that when we had a quarrel with our cook he completely refused to come to any agreement

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until a friend in the role of third man, intervened. The Chinese love to accept difficult situations with the words "meiyon fadz"—"there is no way out". This dictum is sometimes used even when there is a way out as an excuse for inaction. They are generally very patient and will bear calmly a situation which would cause others considerable discomfort and anxiety with the statement, "it is uncertain".

The Chinese are a really contented people. They practise contentment. It is often an asset but also a weakness. They dislike interfering in other people's affairs. They are apt to accept without protest injustices which with a little public spirit could be remedied. They have always believed too much in the ability and honesty of their administrators—or if they know them to be dishonest their fatalism teaches them to accept this also in the belief that every dog has his day. Often people without a conscience succeed in evading the law. They should establish a clear-cut law which would not permit evasions or dishonesty from anybody. The judiciary is perhaps not consulted when it should be and things are settled out of court. One hears little of the case of the opposition and one begins to wonder if there is any opposition. The enemy is often ruthlessly dealt with. Now with the efforts of unceasing indoctrination the peasants are becoming politically conscious—they are conscious of their leaders, that is. But it would seem that they are really more interested not in ideologies but in security, in being left alone to till and reap. They would probably like to have a good Government with the minimum of exertion and the minimum of interference. There is no

doubt a narrowing down of the distance between the officials and the masses so far as standards of living are concerned. But nevertheless the officials are a class that hands out what it deems necessary, not that which it deems good.

Today great economic strides are being made by the present Government. The inflation has been arrested and brought down, banking has been resumed in terms of units of the necessities of life, land redistributed to the peasants, industries set moving, literacy and medical campaigns started in rural areas. The new ideology, it is hoped, will be a substitute for superstition as much as religion. The individual is being emancipated from the family as well as from rites and ceremonies and propriety. The arts serve the cause. One only hopes that in the nation-wide spring-cleaning the friends of the people will not sweep away some of the best assets of the people. It is necessary to harness the whole cart to progress—what is obsolete will die naturally from ineffectiveness. It is so much easier to tear down than build, that one should be particularly careful to replace what is old only by what is proved to be better.

The Chinese people are the heirs of an indigenous culture among the most rich and beautiful in the world. A culture known for its humanist wisdom, its capacity to assimilate, its humour, its patience and generosity. The people have an extraordinary vitality, a capacity for adjustment and new growth. Today with the tremendous possibilities before them, let us hope the people of China will look ahead to a new destiny that is not unworthy of their glorious past.

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As Chinese illiterate women put it, "Others gave birth to us and we give birth to others. What else are we to do?" There is a terrible philosophy in this saying, "Others gave birth to us and we give birth to others." Life becomes a biological procession and the very question of immortality is side-tracked. For that is the exact feeling of a Chinese grandfather holding his grandchild by the hand and going to the shops to buy some candy, with the thought that in five or ten years he will be returning to his grave or to his ancestors. The best that we can hope for in this life is that we shall not have sons and grandsons of whom we need be ashamed. The whole pattern of Chinese life is organized according to this one idea.—LIN YUTANG.





# MANGO LANE



YOU will, at first sight, be inclined to call it a courtesy lane linking up two thoroughfares on the east and west. Once a blind alley, the Municipal Corporation had compensated the owner of the hovel, the pigeon-breasted wall of which had constituted the blind end and knocked down the ramshackle affair, bringing the vision—at once brief and perpetual—of the high road for Bus Numbers 1, 2, 22, and 25 to one standing at the rear—on the arterial tram-route. Which tells you that the lane is in Triplicane in the City of Madras. At its top and tail, four concrete pillars, a little above a man's hip, stand planted. They look like the transmigrated souls of obelisks, ashamed at being so stunted. They are rooted there to prevent vehicular traffic. The cyclist, however, is the only bold transgressor. The space between the pillars is enough to take his machine through. Like a cat through the smallest chink.

If you are curious to discover the lane, do by all means, but let me warn you. The opening at the tram-route is far from a clean proposition. The stench is unmistakable, rendered stale by phenyle and the white disinfectant dust scattered in patches all over the spot. For here the passer-by has found it convenient to come to conclusions with his bursting bladder, in spite of the admonition in black and white of the Commissioner of the Corporation, that he who is found fouling the place will be prosecuted. It is the same at the other end too.

The lane is about half a furlong in length. Entirely along one side of it runs a wall, high enough to hinder peeping, also climbing, for there are sharp bits of glass stuck close like pins in a pincushion to the masonry throughout its top. Behind the wall lies the playground of an adjacent Boys School. From the edge of the playground a mango tree spreads part of its branches over the alley giving its name—Mango Lane—, more popular than what the city-fathers had christened it by, after an illustrious dependent of one of the Nawabs of the Carnatic. When the lane ceased to be a *cul-de-sac* the wall came to be used as hoarding: posters of every kind and colour—dentifrices both paste and powder, change of pictures in the cinema houses, cures for any known disease under the sun, placards of public meetings, invitations to consult ace astrologers and palmists who are on a hurried visit to the town and live in such-and-such a hotel, who could predict your future with miraculous accuracy,—are plastered one upon another so that not an empty inch of space shows. It is the paradise of bill-stickers who have no need to come like thieves in the night, with their ladders and buckets of glue; they make their triumphant entry, in high feather as conquering heroes, much to the amusement and entertainment of the denizens of the lane who often give them a helping hand in sticking the posters. Facing the wall is an irregular row of buildings, real eyesores by the rotting

By MANJERI S. ISVARAN

appearance they present. They house the working-class which lives hand-to-mouth: the millhand, the mechanic, the bricklayer, the plasterer, the plumber, the railway-porter. As many as six families share a modest tenement—a room each and one water-tap and one lavatory for all.

Any day, at any hour—except of course when it sleeps—you could listen to the ‘courtesy’ of the alley from at a distance. Bickerings among its inhabitants are a matter of daily routine. The quarrel will generally start—and generally among women—round about the restricted quadrangle of the water-tap: one accusing the other that she was taking too much time and too many potfuls with no consideration for those that waited; or it will be where the firewood is stacked, a faggot or two missing from a pile will lead to mutual allegations of theft; or in the veranda where a saree hung to dry in the sun if found to be trailing in the dust—blown down by wind—will be attributed to the mischief of the little boy of a co-tenant—a veritable imp—for which he deserved to be flayed alive. And the shrill, wrangling female voices will take on a different note, ferocious and more piercing, if it is a case of one woman coquetting with the man of another, trying to lure him away. Then the abuse becomes really inspired, kaleidoscopic in its variety and intensity; for such an offence—why, for offences less grave—reference to the biological act of reproduction achieves the crescendo of the wordy war, to be repeated over and over again with such scabrous details, with invitations to the dog and the donkey to collaborate—sexiest swear words compared to which the foulness of the sewer is sheer fragrance of roses. Which sets the social tone of the alley.

Into these quarrels between women, the men mostly don’t enter; if they do, it is half-hearted. The grey mare is the better horse. They are in the picture, pre-eminently, on their pay-day when they come home late in the night or do not; but the pay never. It is offered in a lot at the wayside temple, the toddy-shop. Some walk in morose and silent, some wildly hilarious, some in tenebrous battle mood. Then the deep, nocturnal hours will be broken by an agonised feminine cry, the crash of

a pot, the slamming of a door.

The Battle of Wandiwash happened in 1760. Exactly one and three-quarters of a century later a battle on a minor scale was fought in Mango Lane which made history. A new generation has sprung up there since, but its old inhabitants who haven’t heard of Count Lally and Sir Eyre Coote and don’t care a damn for not having heard about them, remember it more strongly and clearly than they do the troublous times of World War II—the helter-skelter exodus from the City consequent on the Japanese bombing scare. It was Kathayi of No. 5 that made this history. On a Wednesday, a week before the Tamil New Year’s Day.

In her early forties, Kathayi was a sumptuous black barrel of a woman. She had a bosom like the cow-catcher of a locomotive engine and a fat behind to balance it. A yard from hip to hip her waist merged with her behind without the suspicion of a borderline so that when she sat she seemed to do it all on her waist. But although a too generous nature had overemphasised her womanhood in these regions of the flesh she carried her body actively as certain obese women can. She had an abundance of rice-and-gingili hair not a thread of which ever broke loose; controlled by oil and combed carefully it was caught into a knot at the back of her head. Her face with its double-chin, small thick-lipped mouth, and pug nose lost between mango-round cheeks, resembled a globular pumpkin but there was an attractive mobility and vitality about it, lit as it was with a pair of lively little ferret’s eyes. Anklets of solid silver wrought in the pattern of rope-strands, two bangles—half-an-inch broad and of copper overlaid with gold—red-stone *kam-mals* (plagiarising rubies), synthetic diamond nose-screws, the yellow *tali* cord nestling cheek by jowl with a necklace of spurious corals—these were the ornaments that decked her person. A *kumkum* mark of the size of a quarter anna shone on her brow. She wore a tight-fitting *ravikkai*,—its material was tough and she had a fondness for the colour of lac; and she preferred her sarees to have chequers red and black, or black dotted with white jasmine buds. Wherever she was she spread all over

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the place; altogether an imposing creature, homespun, wholly un-self-conscious. Her husband was a peon in the University office and had the distinction of being photographed in the company of six successive Vice-chancellors and many distinguished professors. Kannabiran had reached his excellence, physically and mentally, at his twenty-fifth year when he begat his first child, a boy; after that a strange deterioration had set in him and his next attempt at paternity, twelve years after, resulted in a girl and his own final collapse. (But Kathayi was proud of her limited motherhood. A sow brings forth a litter but a lioness?). Now nearing fifty, he was a seedy-looking fragment of a man, amiably henpecked, and permitted by his wife who was indulgent towards him though domineering, to have his weekly dram of arak—his only spot of pleasure—every Sunday evening and on no account during any of the six working days. His meagre salary along with the occasional *bakshish* of a few annas he got from the staff and visitors who wanted to see so-and-so in the office was just enough to keep the pot boiling; but Kathayi was thrifty and full of foresight and she hit upon a plan which would augment the monthly income of eighteen rupees that her husband earned. Which was to set herself up as an *appam* seller in the alley.

At crack of dawn every day—except in the rainy months when she ran her business in the veranda of No. 5—Kathayi will be seen in the open alley, busy baking *appams*. Directly in front of her house, close to the playground wall, under the spreading branches of the mango tree which served as an umbrella against the sun, she would take her seat on a small square mat plaited with palmyra fronds. The fire burnt at an even temperature under the trim earthen oven before her, screened off from view by a tin sheet; the slightest sign of smoke and she would raise the glow by blowing through a foot-length of gleaming brass pipe. A quick wiping with the oil-soaked rag of the inside of the dish warming over the oven, a ladleful of white, fluid rice-flour poured briskly into it, a swift rotation of the dish by holding its edges, covering its mouth over with a similar dish, opening it

and turning over the *appam* with a small spatula of steel, to be put at the next instant into the receiving pan by her side,—Kathayi's dexterous hands went through these processes with amazing speed and precision. Moonbright and soft as new-born flowers in their middle the *appams* spread out crispy, lacy, and brown as the wing of a roach to their circumference. Only three copper pies for one of these marvels with the tastiest bit of curry served on top!

Kathayi had regular customers—man, woman, and child in the alley; also from the two main roads near by. The excellent quality of her *appams* came to be talked of in glowing terms by everyone who, yes, wolfed them and Kathayi found herself famous like the heroine of a legendary tale. It pleased her, this spontaneous praise of her customers, but she very shrewdly detected the tone of flattery when it was meant to be such and no amount of it would weaken her principle which sold only for cash. If you want to live with credit you can't live on credit, she said, which statement can be the brightest feather in the cap of our finest thinking economist.

And so the years passed, the *appams* selling briskly every morning, rain or shine, and the steadily accumulating profits expanding the little family exchequer. Kannabiran had his weekly one dram of arak raised to two which he gulped with gratitude to its giver; Chinni, the ten-year old daughter, got a pair of bangles—narrow, of copper overlaid with gold like her mother's, *lolaks* to her ears, made of gold and silver alloy, shaped like miniature mushrooms fringed with sham little pearls, a string of imitation corals to her neck, and four Fuji silk frocks puffed up at the sleeves and garish with lace to be worn while visiting fun-fairs and during festivals in the temple. While son Chinnan gave up his job as compositor in a press, taking to piece-work, earning so much per galley, to employ his larger leisure to intensify his enthusiasm for the talkies of which he was a passionate devotee. He had left school at the age of sixteen, having stayed in the third form for three years which he found rather tiresome; and threatened his parents that he would run away if he

were sent to that 'prison' again. Kathayi, the lioness, had really given birth to a cub; Kannabiran was too spiritless to interfere. At twenty-two, with long hair parted in the middle and shiny with cheap pomade, lips blue-black because of constant smoking, two short gashes like the halves of a horse-shoe at the base of his hollow cheeks, a coloured scarf tied round his neck, in *lungi* and loose mull *jibba* Chinnan looked a finished roue. No picture, English, Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil—the town spoke in these four major tongues—was ever allowed to escape his patronage; what caught his fancy he saw half-a-dozen times in the company of his cronies. His interest was concentrated in the private lives of film stars—particularly the female; the Hollywood and the Bombay variety were distant ideals; and about some of those nearer home he had sent queries to the quiz column of a popular film journal. The editor's answers, he felt, were far from satisfactory. An idiot could have done better. Once he heard a song-hit he could render it perfectly; few tunes captivated him as did lilting love-duets. There were three exuberant rowdies in the alley and he was the most exuberant of them all.

Thus passed the years, prosperous years to the family, till a rival to Kathayi appeared at the other end of the lane. She was a young woman not yet twenty. No one nearabouts knew when she had arrived; the people in the house—the last in the alley—where she had rented a room were vague about it; the landlord, an elderly widower, who lived with his aged mother in the front part of the building was a close one who resented nosy Parkers. A few of the tenants even thought that he must have picked her up from some den of vice. But this was malicious. She had come early one night accompanied by a middle-aged man, who, she said, was her maternal uncle. She had been deserted by her husband and information had reached them that he was in the City. They had come to find him out. Their village was in Dindigul. The uncle had left in the morning in search of the deserter. That was the last seen of him. For about a week the landlord didn't question her; then, one afternoon, he had knocked at her door—this was

seen by a woman tenant. He had boldly entered her room, his face visibly angry. And the same woman averred that she had heard him talk roughly, though his voice was low, and the girl imploring him softly to bear with her a little, and she had seen him come out, after a while, calm and smiling. The matter was clear. Who had deserted whom? It surely was the other way about. The jade!—and the so-called uncle only a procurer. Piecemeal such was the news that the alley gathered.

But to have hit upon the idea to start herself as an *appam* seller! Whose was the freedom of the alley? Whose indeed? Kathayi felt like tearing the intruder to tatters. But she controlled herself. After all why should she get into a state about it? A hundred such hussies couldn't impair her business.

Barely a bowshot away, Tamarai sat absorbed in her work. Slim, of medium height, well-built, small-breasted, her hair of which she had plenty done into a big-sized bun at the nape of her neck, she looked pretty as a picture. Her skin was limpid brown. Her low-cut blouse revealed the cleft of her bosom as she bent to bake the *appams* over the oven; and her thin, printed saree showed off her charms to advantage. Her eyes were big and black, full of a liquid, slumberous beauty; the jaunty, elegant flexions of her body, the head now tilted bird-like, now thrown back as if to receive an admiring glance, displayed a natural flair for coquetry. Her customers gradually increased and inside of a month she had set up business she found herself well established in the alley.

From what gutter had this tripe emerged? She cracks jokes with her customers. She laughs. By God, she laughs! It is the same as stripping herself nude. Hatred began to eat Kathayi's heart. For her custom was dwindling. Most of the people in the lane, especially the young men had gone over to Tamarai. Her boiled white peas were a miracle. And Kathayi too started peas.

She told her husband: "The slut!"

She told her son: "The plague!"

Kannabiran didn't know what to make of it.



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Chinnan said:—

"Don't mind her, mother. She's only a bird of passage."

"Bird of passage indeed!" Kathayi fumed. "She has come to stay. Don't you know what people are talking? I don't want to soil my tongue by telling it. You are young. You won't understand."

The youthful innocent whistled. Out of respect for his mother he suppressed his knowledge of twenty-two years. She was too pre-occupied to reckon with his precocity in a particular field.

The lane threw up its tale-bearers. How Kathayi reviled her grossly reached Tamarai's ears. But she held her tongue in patience. Despite the most blatant provocation. Once, instructed by Kathayi, her little daughter Chinni had walked up to the end of the alley, passing Tamarai, then turning back and re-passing her, had hawked and spat right in front of Tamarai's oven. That was the moment when the young woman had come nearest to breaking the pot holding water on the offender's head. But she had gritted her teeth and refrained from retaliating. She resolved to give rope enough to her rival.

The climax was not long in coming.

It was a Wednesday. After an early breakfast Kannabiran left for Mambalam to visit a sick sister. Chinnan too went out, to advise a printer-friend, as he told his mother, on the purchase of a cutting-machine and some cases for types. Kathayi took her accustomed place in the alley. The first *appam* she baked blackened with a pungent smell; it had never happened like that before and her heart went heavy with foreboding. She drew out one of the three burning brands of casuarina from beneath the oven to temper the fire and baked a second. That too curled black. She trembled with vexation and an ominous fear. Instinctively she looked to her right and saw Tamarai in the full swing of her business. Four or five young fellows squatted on their heels in a cluster round her, eating *appams* and laughing noisily. Playing the giddy goat—the vagabonds! The noisiest appeared to be one of her son's cronies. The traitor—she hissed under her breath. At sight of

the young woman nodding her head gaily, in a manner that she had not the slightest care in the world, Kathayi's jealous hatred flared up, but her work requiring urgent attention she turned her eyes to the baking dish, with an inward prayer to the Almighty to make whatsoever there was crooked straight, to remove the spell which that fiend of a woman, Tamarai, might have cast upon her wholesome rice-flour. The third *appam* came off right. Her mind was partially at rest. But the hateful image of her enemy who sat at a stone's throw beyond and whom, with the grimmest determination, she decided not to look at, continued to torment her. Presently she heard a muffled cough. She looked up. It was Ponnal, the jutkawallah, from the nearest hackney-cab stand. He was the earliest and her most regular customer, a wizened old man with a mop of greying hair, with most of his teeth gone, and a drooping walrus moustache. She smiled faintly at him. Encouraged he squatted near, and coughed again. But his hand, contrary to usual, she noticed out of the corner of an eye, did not seek the purse sewed on to his canvas belt. She understood at once. This beating about the bush was for credit. It was strange. He had never done so before. "I hadn't had a fare throughout yesterday evening. Not even in the night when the last train came at ten," he said, the tip of his nose twitching as it inhaled the delicious smell of baking and his whiskers wobbling.

"But I haven't as yet sold the first *appam* for cash. You know what it is. Come after some time," Kathayi said.

The jutkawallah moved out of sight. His loyalty, when many others had turned ungrateful, she thought, deserved credit. However, an empty till in the early morning was a deity to be respected. And that with nothing but the legal tender of the land.

The minutes passed. The pile of *appams* in the platter grew in height. The fire sank into ashes in the oven. Around it flies began to buzz and settle in larger numbers on the drops of oil and rice-flour, to rise again in their olfactory flight round odours that hung like invisible garlands

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in the air. The rising sun increased in warmth. An hour was reaching its end.

After the jutkawallah there had been no sign of a customer. It was strange beyond comprehension. Like a storm-tossed boat her mind grew perturbed. All of a sudden she was lashed to a fury. She raised her head and looked to the right. The blazes! She found her adversary looking at her! So that was how she bedevilled! Behind one's back. She saw red. She stared at the slim figure of the young woman—the object of her hate and jealousy—till to her obsessed gaze it turned swollen, distorted; something oleaginous oozed out of those bloated outlines, some bloody-minded malevolence that couldn't help betraying itself. For a moment she was dismayed; then she became cool, self-possessed. She stood up, and spitting the gob of betel and tobacco and nut out of her mouth, to express contempt, and tottering as if all her tallow was in the fire, brandished the broomstick at Tamarai.

The young woman met the intended threat. Rising to her feet she advanced with measured, deliberate steps towards Kathayi. At the short range of a couple of yards she stopped.

"What have I done to you that you should insult me thus? I don't even know you," she said, calmly.

"Come to talk big, have you?" Kathayi answered with a sneer.

"Not I. But you've invited me—with a broomstick. That's hardly polite."

"Politeness to you! What d'you think you are? A princess?"

"A princess—no. But one making an honest living like anybody else."

"Honest. Come to beg in our alley from God knows where. Whore!" The word was spat out, like the hiss of a snake.

"Mind what you say."

Tamarai trembled a little. Her brows knit together. There was a faint quivering about the corners of her mouth.

"Whore!" snapped Kathayi, again. "The whole alley knows what you are. Shamelessly carrying on with that widower—"

"It's you who are a whore," Tamarai broke in impetuously, "a filthy, putrid, old—"

The broomstick which Kathayi held behind her back shot out to take its aim on Tamarai's head. But she ducked aside, raising her hands to ward it off and in the act caught the blow pat on her glass bangles some of which were smashed to bits.

"Strumpet," Kathayi roared, in a towering rage.

"You are that, your mother is that, your grandmother is that—"

Wary, Tamarai saw the broom descending again when she seized it and twisted it out of Kathayi's hands, the string which held it together loosened and it slipped to the ground like a needle-bath.

"There, lick it," Kathayi shouted, turning round her fat rump, when with a sharp swish something whip-like slashed one of her shoulders. Tamarai had unknotted her big bun of hair and pulling out the false tuft therefrom was belabouring her assailant with it.

Kathayi screamed for her husband and for her son, backing foot by foot. Chinni came running out of the house and on seeing her mother's plight started to yell.

"Squeal your loudest," cried Tamarai, giving stroke after stroke, on the shoulders, arms, bosom, hips of the fat body, with the whip of her false tuft, holding her enemy at bay.

The hubbub of the brawl collected a crowd of passers-by, loafers, and the dwellers of the lane on their verandas. The fight went full-tilt and they enjoyed it. Hen-fight, better than the cocks, which I've seen, said a fellow, chortling. Nobody wished to stop it, it was too good a show to be ended by man's stupid interference.

Meanwhile, Chinni reading the intention in her mother's painwracked face rushed to the end of the alley, kicked Tamarai's oven till it rolled to where the male of the species relieved themselves, threw mud into the baking dish, and broke the pot that held the rice-flour. As a crowning act she scattered the appams—a few that remained in a flat-bottomed basket—on the ground to which a pariah dog helped itself. Then she ran back to worry Tamarai from behind, to pinch, scratch, bite, beat, kick, and spit on her, but by then the fight had come to an end, Kathayi with a final sweep



charging and pinning her adversary down by her heavy bulk and ripping her blouse completely at the back, but moaning and quivering like a jelly and continuing to bawl out filthy abuse after the retreating Tamarai.

"There she goes, the harlot, to hawk herself at the four cross-roads."

And that was how Kathayi made history in Mango Lane.

The older among her neighbours were sorry that she was thrashed—though the ultimate victory was hers—by a stranger, a mere slip of a girl; but the majority were glad, sharing the view that what had happened was for the best: it would place her, she was getting a little purse-proud and stand-offish. And all of them thought: What was to be the aftermath of the fight? Would there be an aftermath? And all of them were certain that the two women would not run their business for some time at least, the fight had caused minor physical injuries to both.

But, behold!—at cock-crow the following morning Kathayi was at her

usual spot under the shade of the mango tree. Her husband and her daughter helped her to bring the paraphernalia of trade out into the alley. Chinnan had not returned home the previous night. She was not bothered on that score, the boy must be with one of his friends—he had stayed like that often before. She was even glad of his absence; for had he been there to see his dear mother insulted by a common tart he would have killed the creature. That would be murder. She didn't want that to happen. She loved peace.

From her seat, haughty like a queen, Kathayi directed her glance to the other end of the lane. She couldn't believe her eyes. She looked again, intently. The place of her rival stood empty. Her triumph was complete. A smile radiated from her homely, pumpkin face, a smile that embraced the entire alley.

She began her task of baking with great alacrity. Suddenly she remembered Ponnal, the jutkawallah. Poor fellow! She had asked him to come again yesterday morning. Had he or

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had he not? Surely he wouldn't have, for if he had, he would have witnessed the fight and run to her rescue. Not like those who lived in the lane and had eaten her *appams*—the dirty dogs! She thought of him with kindness. And as if in answer to her thoughts he was there soon, taking an anna piece from his purse and cupping his hands for the *appams*.

She served him. She felt so maternal. She watched him eat quietly, without speaking a word, a pucker on his brow. Doubt entered her, had he heard of the incident?

"Why are you not talking, Ponna?" she asked. "Is it because I didn't give you credit yesterday? I wanted you to come again but you didn't." She watched him slyly.

"I couldn't,"—and as he spoke she noticed him looking towards the further end of the alley—"I had unexpected good luck immediately after I left you. A fare to town and close on the heels of it three more from the Central Station. All to town following the incoming trains. The last was to Egmore at seven in the evening."

She drew a breath of relief. He had not heard.

"Some more curry," and dealing out a liberal ladleful on the top of an *appam* she extended it to him. "Eat it and you needn't pay for it. Then only my heart will be at peace for the sin of having sent a man hungry."

He accepted it. She was pleased.

"I saw her at the Egmore railway station yesterday at about eight

o'clock in the night," he said, munching.

"Saw whom?" Kathayi asked, though she knew intuitively.

"Her. The one who used to sell *appams* yonder there," he replied, jerking his head to indicate the spot.

"Hm. Good riddance. The lane is cleaner for it."

"I saw him too."

"Who?"

"Your son."

"Chinnan!" she exclaimed.  
"Where?"

"There. He was with her. Both of them were sitting on a bench in the hall where the third class passengers wait."

"Impossible!"

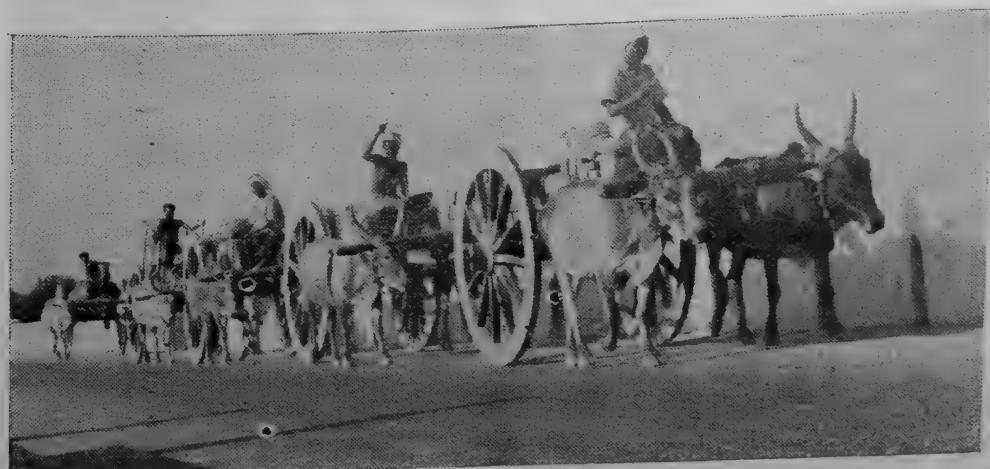
"As clear as I see you. Why should I tell a lie?"

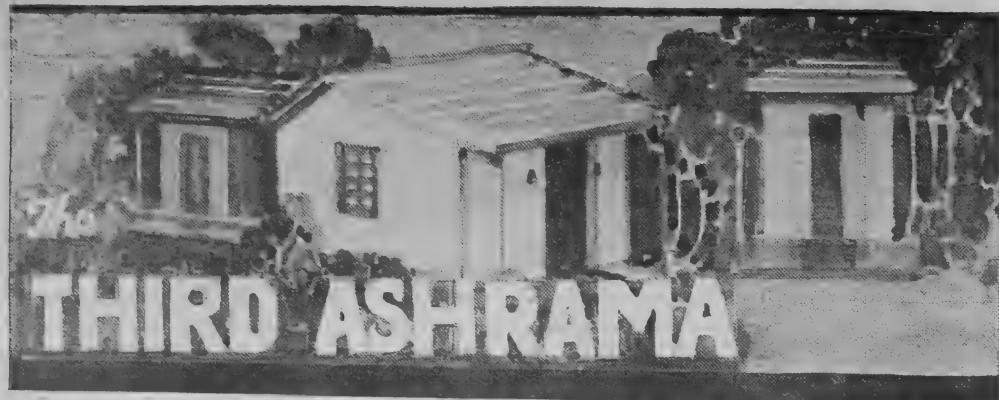
Kathayi felt a sudden dizziness in her head. She closed her eyes, a stabbing pain in her heart. When she opened them she found the jutka-wallah had gone.

Impossible! Yet it was true. Honesty had only one tongue and it was there in what she had heard.

The son on whom she doted had done a bunk. With a bitch. The shame, the humiliation of it! She left the lane, bag and baggage, not caring to wait for the birth of the New Year's Day.

And that was the time when Kathayi made real history in Mango Lane.





## THIRD ASHRAMA

WHILE we may give up as past mending the old Hindu concept of *varna*, the traditional Hindu scheme of life with its four clearly marked stages or *ashramas* and its four clearly defined ends or *puru-sharthas* may be worth preserving or reviving in the modern context and even in relation to the more vigorous modern religions. Dr. Bhagavan Das, who has thought long and written much on the essential unity of the different historical religions, has strongly recommended this revival of *ashrama dharma* by assigning to the modern *vanaprastha* the function of disinterested social service.

The two early stages, that of the student and that of the house-holder, provide, within the limits set by *dharma*, for the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, for material progress along the *pravritti marga*. The house-holder becomes in time a citizen and looks at his family with detachment as only a part of the country and again at his country as only a part of the world. The house-holder thus slowly progresses towards the *vanaprastha* stage, devoted to disinterested social service and philosophical study, and then finally towards *sanyasa* or total renunciation. In the later stages spiritual concerns replace the material, the inward-going energies replace the outward-going energies, and one treads the *nivritti marga*. Just as the womb is a vale of body-making, so society is a vale of soul-making; and the individual soul must develop first by growing into, and then by growing out of, its

social sheath. It is for the health of society as well as of the individual that this twin process should go on; and that the *nivritti* way-farers should not be hopelessly outnumbered and overpowered by the *pravritti* way-farers.

If, by legislation and by the pressure of public opinion and social arrangements, we enforce, at the beginning of the individual's career, the observance of *student life*, is it not worth considering that during the later half of the individual's career we should by similar means encourage

the *vanaprastha* attitude and mode of living? True, one may follow the *ashrama dharma* without knowing it; it is arguable that Pandit Nehru is treading, though at a more

leisurely pace, the same path that Gandhiji trod a generation ago. Still it would be a great gain all round if we had a recognisable class of *vanaprasthas* or 'philosopher-statesmen.' The history of India in the 1940's would have been very different indeed if there had been, not one, but half-a-dozen *vanaprasthas* recognised as such; and if Gandhiji had realised the change in himself when he had ceased to be a *vanaprastha* and was ripe for *sanyasa*.

Though Hindu society is to-day—and has been for a thousand years—in a terrible mess, its Metaphysics, Mythology, Music and Sociology are still very much alive and possess a power not only of survival but also of growth, adaptation and applicability,

By K. S.

which is amazing. The triumphant illustration of Bhakti, Karma, Jnana and Yoga in the lives of Ramakrishna, Gandhi, Ramana and Aurobindo is too conspicuous, and also too close to the pre-determined pattern, to be brushed aside as meaningless or as merely accidental. It is quite clear that the old paths, if faithfully followed, still do lead to the promised goal. We do seem to possess the recipe for the perfection of the spirit in man; and these aspirants for perfection, by seeking and finding the kingdom of heaven for themselves, had had many other things added unto them and to their society. If a tree is to be judged by its fruit, surely Hinduism which can still produce such perfect persons has not out-lived its usefulness. To some of the secular problems of the modern day it may offer solutions which will be acceptable to "out-siders"; and it may be that through these "out-siders" the social cohesion that the Hindus now lack will come at last to them.

\* \* \* \*

Gerald Heard, in a long series of books beginning with "Man the Master", pleads for a study and revival of Hinduism for a possible solution of the world's social and political problems. Others (like Lewis Mumford, Aldous Huxley, Kenneth Walker, Charles Waterman and Gai Eaton, with the weekly MANAS and HARIJAN, the monthly ARYAN PATH, and the quarterly VEDANTA AND THE WEST) have kept up the chorus of praise for the Higher Morality that releases the soul and that alone can save mankind. Vinoba Bhave and the Sarvodaya workers are busy founding the Kingdom of Heaven on Indian soil.

As against these siren voices, Dr. A. D. Lindsay in his "Two Moralities" brings out, with the courage of commonsense, the important distinction between the Morality of My Station and its Duties, on the one hand, and the Morality of Grace or the Challenge to Perfection, on the other. If we call the two Moralities respectively the Kshatriya and the Brahmana dharma, it would be to-day both meaningless and offensive. But if we call them the vanaprastha and the sanyasa dharma it may carry sense and conviction. The argument

of the book is an apology for *adhikara-bheda*, for observing ourselves and enforcing on others "the rules of the game" so long as we play it. The Rules of the Game should be real and actual and observed in practice by all the parties to the game and not by one party only. The Lower Morality is strictly reciprocal and consists of Rights claimed as well as Duties owed; and we should be prepared to use organised force for establishing the rule of law impartially on all groups and individuals. The best of us should be ready and willing to do the morally "dirty" but socially necessary work of police-men, jailors and soldiers. The conclusion is that in the world, composed as it is mainly of householders, the morality of Grace cannot supersede or abolish the morality of My Station and its Duties.

This doctrine is very close to the teaching that Arjuna receives in the *Gita* and it cannot be too often or too emphatically repeated.

But the Higher Morality, the "open" Morality, springs from the inner life and is not OWED to any other person and should not be demanded of any one. The Morality of Grace, which consists in loving your enemies, is essentially anarchic, for he who loves his enemies has often to let down his friends. It can only be practised by the idealist who cares less for the social structure than for his own soul, by the seeker whose pursuit of perfection has taken him beyond the *grahastha* and well towards the *sanyasa* stage.

Gandhiji made no secret of his own ideal in life: As early as April 1924, he declared in *Young India*:

"My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. I have no desire for the perishable Kingdom of Earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is "Moksha.... My patriotism is for me a stage in my journey to the eternal land of freedom and peace. For me there are no politics devoid of religion. Politics devoid of religion are a death-trap, because they kill the soul."

Now the extra-ordinary power of Gandhiji arose from his being a true and typical *vanaprastha* evolving into a *sanyasi*. If like Ramakrishna, Ramana or Aurobindo he had taken the promotion due to him,

if some time between 1942 and 1947 he had withdrawn from the world, all would have been well with him. But he underrated his own achievement and overrated the capacity of others; he ignored the yawning gulf between his *adhikara* and that of his fellow-countrymen. The success of soul-force *vis-a-vis* Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence and its failure *vis-a-vis* Jinnah ought to have opened Gandhiji's eyes to the difference between a people who have accepted the Lower Morality and can conceive the Higher Morality and a people who have not accepted the Lower Morality and cannot conceive the Higher Morality. But Gandhiji was too far committed to the Higher Morality to question its universal validity; and he made the fatal mistake of attempting to impose it on a society which was not yet ready for it. This pursuit of individual perfection through political action, this foreshortening of the social ideal, brought about the death of Gandhiji and has left his countrymen in a most embarrassing and unenviable plight.

In the words of Dr. Lindsay, "to try to impose by social pressure a morality too high for an ordinary person leads to disillusionment, hypocrisy and illegality." Gandhiji's persistent attempt to impose on the rank and file of his following his own morality of *ahimsa* born of *aparigraha* created an atmosphere of rank hypocrisy in which opposition to Gandhiji was tantamount to blasphemy, and the seekers of power pretended to be as non-violent and as detached as Gandhiji himself. In their own private affairs and in looking after their families these men were wide-awake and grasping *grahasthas*, but when it came to the affairs of India they were content to be almost complete *sanyasis*, like Gandhiji himself. When, as in the great Calcutta Killing of August, 1946, the Muslims took full advantage of this hypocritical situation and called upon all Hindus to behave like so many Gandhis, events inevitably followed which culminated in the first (and let us hope the last) martyrdom in Indian history.

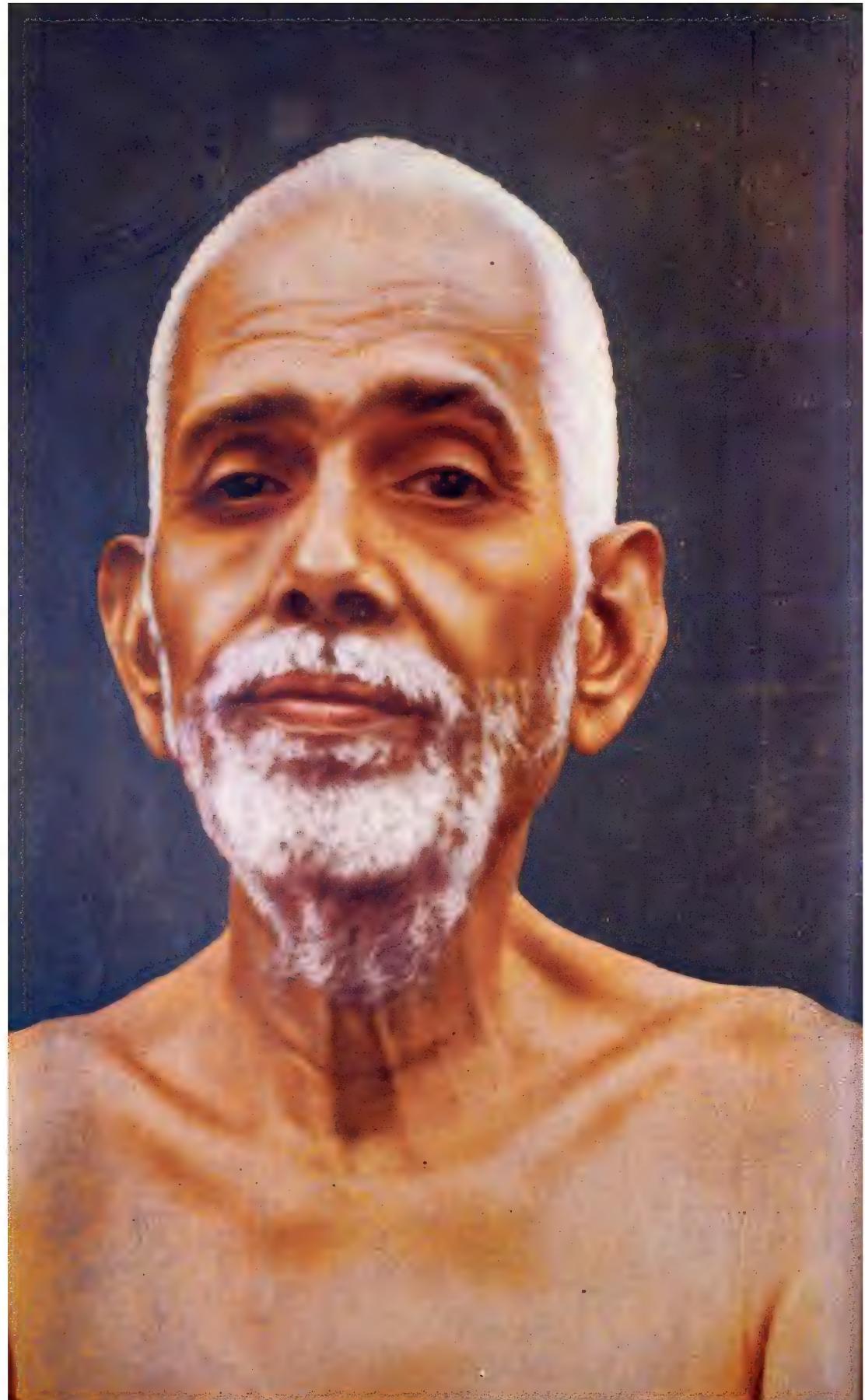
Gandhiji saved his own soul, as he had always planned to do, and took his place by the side of Socrates and Jesus; but in the process he has thrust

upon us political freedom before we were fit for it, and now we do not know what to do with it.

If a fond importunate parent by sitting *dharna* at the Principal's door manages to get his S. S. L. C. son admitted into the Fifth Honours Class, two courses are open to the son: he can work very, very hard indeed and justify his admission by mastering his subjects and getting through his examination or he can be a disgrace and nuisance to his class. It is for the people of India to-day heroically to vindicate or basely to betray Gandhiji's confidence in them.

It is at this moral crisis that all the groups in India should consider the adoption of the ancient Indian scheme of life, which alone can help the whole nation to realise Gandhiji's dreams. According to this scheme the individual is unique and precious and supreme; there is nothing higher than personality; and every one, transcending his family and group loyalties, can and should develop his personality through the later *ashramas* for the attainment in due course of the *purusharthas* of *dharma* and *moksha*. If one *vanaprastha* can have and exercise so much of the power of love, how much of beneficent and harmonising power could be developed if true *vanaprasthas* spring in large numbers from among Christians and Muslims as well as Hindus? When by the active and sincere practice of their religious *dharma*s many Parsis, Christians and Muslims have evolved into *vanaprasthas* and *sanyasis*, Hinduism would have finally fulfilled itself. India can never be a secular state in the sense that it is indifferent or opposed to religion. It can only be a *dharmaic* state and it will achieve its destiny only by producing the best Muslim and Christian saints in the world as it has always produced good Hindu saints. Such a land would indeed be a sanctuary of the spirit in which the strongest sanction for right conduct would be sanctity. Those who plan the national life should first plan the individual life by providing in it a distinct place for plain living and disinterested service to mankind.

Our third Ashrama will then serve as a *sanctum sanctorum* for the third force for which the world is longing and waiting.



# SRI RAMANA

ERNEST LEHRS, the German scientist-philosopher, in his book *Man and Matter*, cites again and again the simple wisdom of the child in Hans Andersen's tale of the Emperor's clothes. The child sees the naked truth hidden from its sophisticated seniors. Stories of Buddha, Jesus and St. Francis appeal straight to children and child-like minds and their interest spreads even to grown-ups who are too busy getting and spending to notice the sun and the other stars.

Saints and sages, who are the most normal people we know and who prefigure the evolutionary possibilities of the race, fill us with deep joy, for they are faithful photographs of our own inmost selves and patterns of the future outward perfection of all mankind. No wonder, Sri Ramana, clad in his *koupinas*, had the air and authority of a Solar Emperor and his name has still the news-value of a cinema-star's.

While at school at Madura, young Venkataraman read the *Peria-purānam*, a verse account of the sixty-three Tamil Saivite saints. Thereafter he went often to the great temple at Madura and prayed to Siva to add him too to His line of devotees. At 16, like Markandeya, he conquered Mortality by meditating on the death of the body and thus realising the Immortal Self. Then he was drawn to Tiruvannamalai, where he stayed for 54 years, shedding the light of his benignant influence on all alike.

When Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, the great Sanskrit scholar, was living with Maharshi early in 1908, "something like

a meteor appeared at dawn, touched Maharshi's forehead, retreated, and came again and touched him six times." Again on the night of April 14th, 1950, as Maharshi cast off his body, a bright meteor shooting over the ashram was seen and noted by all and sundry all over South India.

Similar phenomena—flashes of light, visions, miraculous healings—have often been reported to Maharshi. But he brushed them aside or gave simple and natural explanations of them, and warned people not to think of such odd happenings, but to pursue the grand aim of Self-Realisation, which is the biggest miracle of all.

In the Golden Jubilee Souvenir, published in 1946 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Maharshi's arrival at Arunachala, and in the two books "Self-Realisation" and "Mahayoga" which describe his life and teachings, we get a wealth of views and impressions whose variety reflects the differences of the several writers and the freedom of approach which the Sage not only permitted but welcomed in his devotees and disciples. Swami Siddheswarananda, M. Olivier Lacombe, Prof. S. Radhakrishnan and Prof. C. G. Jung, among others, bring out authoritatively the traditional aspect of Maharshi's achievement and show how he represents the culmination of advaitic thought. The detailed description of the Jivanmukta as found in the Upanishads, the Gita, the Viveka Chudamani and other religious classics was fully borne out by the experience and behaviour of Sri Ramana.

His apt and telling

By A BHAKTA

expositions of *advaita vedanta* brought its truth home to the simplest folk. "The world, as filled with Brahman, is real, like the body filled with life. But the world, cut off from Brahman and regarded as self-dependent, is unreal, like a corpse." The search for meaning and purpose is the search for Reality.

To a question on the relation of Karma Yoga and Karma Sanyasa, he gave an answer in the manner of a Zen master. Without uttering a word, he walked up the hill, cut off two sticks from a tree and fashioned them into walking sticks. One he gave to the questioner and the other to a passer-by. Then he said, "The making of the walking sticks is Karmayoga; the gift of them is Sanyasa." The Sage did not make them or take them for himself. Similarly, the making and eating of 'appalams' served as an allegory and a sacrament.

Apart from his spoken, acted and written teachings, the simple human friendliness of Bhagavan showed the utter *soulabhyā*, the easy accessibility, of the ultimate Truth when it graciously chooses to embody itself in human form. Bhagavan was not merely a yogi or a teacher or a saint; he was a Seer, a being comprehending and transcending all these lower categories; and he succeeded in being a friend of every one—sinner or saint, prince or peasant, old or young, learned or ignorant, man or woman, cow, dog, monkey or peacock. Many years ago J. C. Molony, I.C.S., noted how his hound preferred the hermit's company to his own. Hundreds of quite ordinary (human) visitors to the ashrama were treated like intimate friends by Maharshi who took a most sympathetic interest in all their personal affairs, the train they came by, the food they ate, the marriages and deaths, the appointments and promotions, that occurred in their families. No one felt that he was unimportant or unwanted. Women and Harijans were no less welcome than learned Brahmins to this charmed circle. To all he taught humility without humiliating any, as he taught self-surrender without loss of freedom.

If the good teacher is a friend who joins you where you are and leads you up from that point to the moun-

tain top of Truth, then Maharshi is the greatest teacher the world has seen because he refused to stretch us on a Procrustean bed of creed or conduct. He did not merely concede as a matter of formal politeness, but convinced everyone of his devotees and disciples, that there are as many distinct ways of reaching the goal as there are unique human individuals. His more than mother-like tenderness made no harsh choice between one friend and another among the thousands of his friends; and his steady, calm, unfailing cheerfulness and rock-like certainty sprang from his conviction that the world process must end in the final release of all beings. "When the ego rises, the mind is separated from its source, the Self, and is restless, like a stone thrown up into the air or like the waters of a river. When the stone or the river reaches its place of origin, the ground or the ocean, it comes to rest. So too the mind comes to rest and is happy when it returns to and rests in its source. As the stone and the river are sure to return to their starting place, so too the mind will inevitably—at some time—return to its source. Thus all shall reach the Goal.... Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside." In his conversation with children, birds and animals one noticed with envy the outflow of a more active, spontaneous grace, because no doubt these unspoilt creatures were more at home in his world of integral joy.

\* \* \*

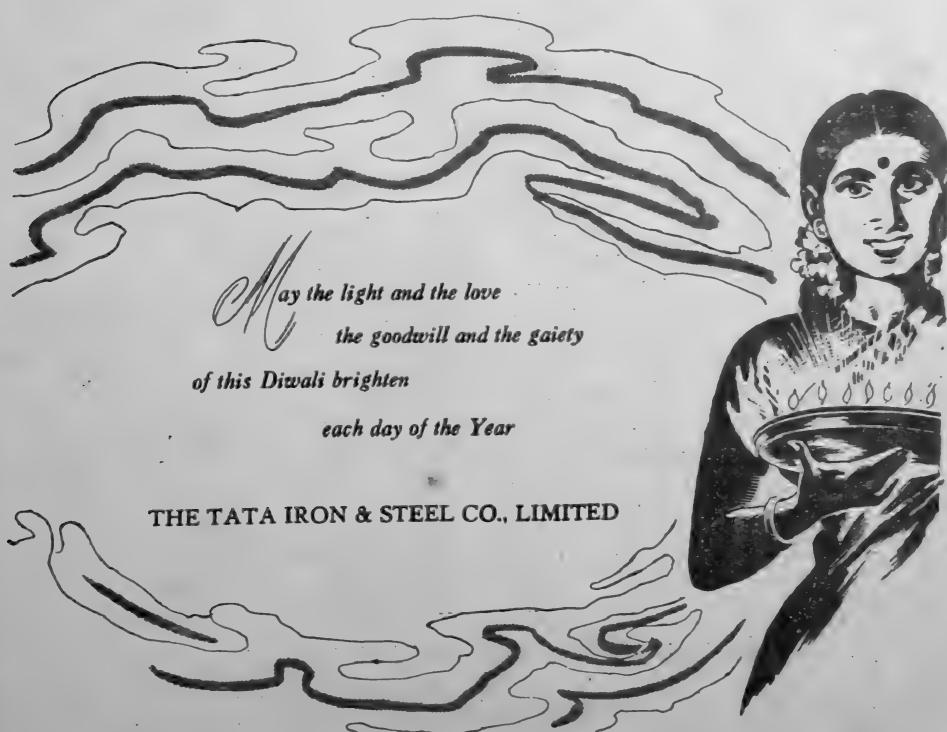
Although in intellectual discussions, Maharshi took his uncompromising stand on Sankara's *advaita vedanta* and disclaimed any originality, still he popularised, if he did not invent, a technique of self-analysis which renders easy and aseptic that essential operation which destroys the mind and releases the spirit from its entanglement with the world and the flesh. "His method is practical and, when understood, is quite scientific in its way. He brings no supernatural power and demands no blind religious faith. The sublime spirituality of Maharshi's atmosphere and the rational self-questioning of his philosophy find but a faint echo in yonder temple of Arunachala. Even the

word 'God' is rarely on his lips. He avoids (nay warns every seeker not to sail in) the dark and debatable waters of wizardry, in which so many promising voyages have ended in ship-wreck. He simply puts forward a way of self-analysis, which can be practised irrespective of any ancient or modern theories and beliefs which one may hold, a way that will finally lead man to true Self-Knowledge." (*Self-Realisation*, IV Edn. Pp. 272-273)

Many weapons invented by the great teachers of mankind for use against the Devil have been taken hold of by the Devil himself, who can not only quote scripture when it suits him but can wield all the merits and siddhis of spiritual aspirants and turn them against their owners. The vast armoury of virtues collected by good men only to be captured and utilised by the Devil has been brilliantly catalogued by C. S. Lewis in his "Screwtape Letters." But the sober, scientific, introspective method of Sri Ramana makes and keeps ready for the Enemy's hands all the pleasant means for his self-destruction. All questions

that trouble the good man are reducible, and should be reduced, to the one question "Who am I?" Ultimately the question of "Who am I?" will lead to the discovery and realisation of the Self, the winning of the ego-less state in which there are no questions and no answers, but only silence, only the calm joy of mere being. But in the long, long way that stretches between ourselves as we are, and that ultimate peace of pure being which is our final goal, the series of partial and tentative answers to the question "Who am I?" will always and inevitably lead to self-improvement at each level of thought, feeling and action. This query is the metaphysical master-key to all the practical problems of *sarvodaya*, for it opens to us all the many, lovely mansions of our Father's house.

Bhagavan has no creed of his own because he is ego-less. What we can learn from him is the application to religion of the strictly scientific temper and the method of tentative, disinterested analysis. All beliefs are to be held only tentatively, never



bigotedly, because all beliefs will one day be consumed in the fire of the experience of the Self.

The surrender of the "I" to a god, a creed or an institution transfers our attachment from the "I" to the "MY," to "my god", "my creed", "my church"; and this only strengthens the ego-sense. The ego, whether of the individual "I" or the collective "we", is the arch-deceiver Satan, the sole Enemy of God and man. By the steady, disinterested, impersonal use of the scientific question "Who am I?" the devotee of the saint slowly develops into a disciple of the Sage; the Guru without is slowly merged in the Guru within; the knot of the mind, the ego-sense, which binds the real Self to the world and the body, is worn out or cut off and the joyous peace of pure being is attained. The primary ignorance or original sin consists in the identification of our Self with the body. This can and should be got rid of by the tentative acceptance and systematic practice of Bhagavan's method of inquiry, and the result may be watched for himself by any honest experimenter. All earlier systems of meditation and spiritual practices are superseded and transcended by this final, all-comprehensive and all-powerful technique of Sri Ramana.

The Hebrew name for God ("Jehovah" which means "I am") expresses perfectly this truth that the Self is God. Lord Jesus meant the same egoless state when he said "The Kingdom of God is within you" and "Know the truth and the truth will make you free". The ego-life is no life, but death. From this death of our ordinary life we awake into immortality by passing in imagination through the death of the body, as Bhagavan did in his sixteenth year by his dramatization of his body's death.

The danger of mere rationalism is avoided by devotion to the holy and beloved person of the Guru. "Self-reliance as commonly understood is ego-reliance and it worsens bondage.

Reliance on God is alone true self-reliance because He is the Self." All the free-will that we need and ought to enjoy can be exercised in the process of experiment and enquiry, in the infinite variety of the applications of the question "Who am I?"

Sri Ramana's simple message is: "The best way for one to serve the world is to win the egoless state. If you are anxious to help the world but think you cannot do so by attaining the egoless state, then surrender to God all the world's problems along with your own." Again: "Help yourself; and you will help the world... Yes! Helping yourself, you help the world. You are in the world. You are the world... You are the world and the world is you. You do not help the world at all by *wishing* or *trying* to do so, but only by helping yourself, that is, by realising your Perfection."

It is open to the scientist to accept and apply the Sage's method of inquiry; it is open to the devotee to surrender himself and his problems to the saint; and the saint and the Sage in Sri Ramana will gently draw the intellect of the one and the heart of the other towards the distant but inescapable goal of Satchidananda.

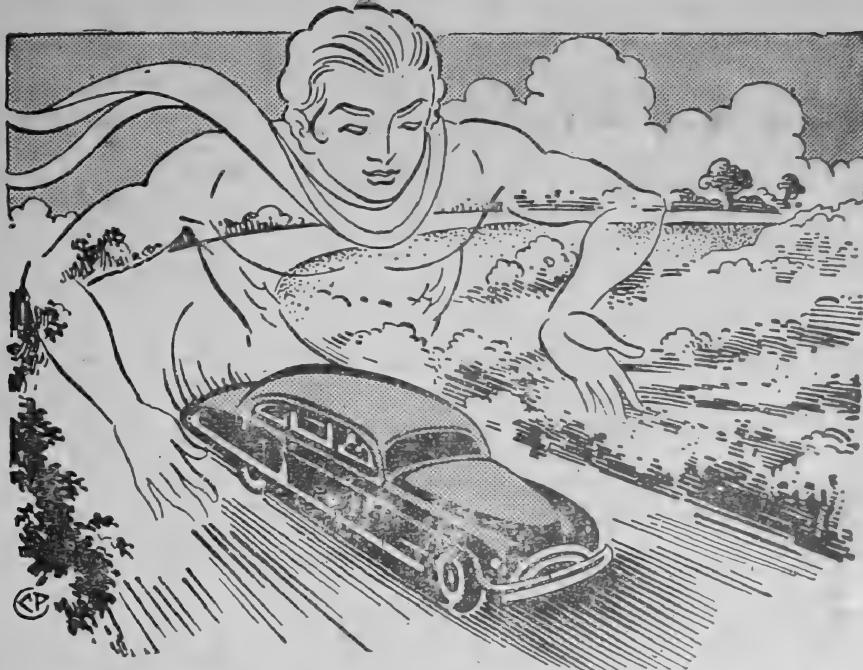
"That one point where all religions meet is the realisation,—not in some mystical sense, but in the most worldly, most literal and everyday sense, and the more worldly and everyday and practical the better,—of the fact that *God is everything and everything is God*."

Not only when the moon shines brightly and the nightingales divinely sing, not only in the hushed presence of a mighty Seer, but all the time and everywhere, we should know and feel that "the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea" of *samsara* is a mere surface phenomenon and that we, mortal millions, are not so many separate, floating islands, but "parts of a single continent", all rooted in the solid and life-sustaining Ground of Being.

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*Unselfishness was only a hypocritical form of selfishness, religion far-sighted prudence, respectability the habit of being intimidated by threats which society considered honourable, martyrdom pig-headed obstinacy, self-denial masochism, and morality in general a rationalization of the impulse to blame.*

—C. E. M. JOAD.



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# SHIRAM BIVERTIES

BY BHIRAM

THE problem posed itself on me since my boyhood and the longer I live the more do I wonder at human diversity. My cousin, an elder to me was an ardent devotee of tennis and had won many trophies even before school leaving age, but I was singularly indifferent to the game though not particularly inapt at it. It may be that I could have been drawn into a desire for it and developed my physique a little more and my angularities a little less in my early days but for the fact that Krishna who was constrained to volley only with the bland walls at home would tactlessly so entreat me to play with him during off times, with a bench for a net and a dealwood plank for a bat and thereby so put a premium on my indifference, that the play developed only a mercenary interest in me for I sold my responses strictly on barter basis in the shape of a visit to the puppet show at the street corner or an extra share of the day's eats from his portion. Not that I was particularly greedy. It was merely a tit for tat, for by some obscure mesmerism he had established from my toddling days an unrequited prerogative: that I should pay a tribute of three little moietyes of whatever was given to us as estables!

Dr. Balram is a good physician and a true friend, but music to him is a mysterious melody affecting the nerves of many human beings otherwise normal in health. He generally excuses himself from functions entailing musical 'entertainment' but when social imperatives inveigle him into any, he passes time concentrating his attention on the gymnastics of the performance. His genial contribution to general conversation by way of subsequent appreciation of talent is

to commend the vigour of the ghatam artist's finger work and to wonder that the frail pot could stand such punishment.

Some have as much use for landscapes and sunsets as for a cold in the head. These evoke no more response than what Boswell obtained from Johnson when he expatiated on the views of Scotland. Dhanraj has now become Seth Dhanraj with a curved frontispiece and God knows how many lakhs to his credit and in how many banks. In the days our pathways crossed each other, he was in that stage of ascent when he had to make useful footholds of such devices as khadi, swadeshi and swaraj, to gain vantage points. The occasion was my first depiction of a still pool in water colours with reflections of the marginal trees and reeds. Whatever its imperfections, it was a handiwork which had given me much satisfaction in the rendering. It was the feelings of liberation which one gets when after systematically kicking at the mud bottom of a pond he suddenly finds himself kicking the water and is verily afloat swimming—same as when after being pushed and pummelled inelegantly on a bicycle for days the novice gets loose from the controlling hand and finds that he is actually balancing the wheels on his own. It was a pity that it should have been Dhanraj who chanced to see my water colour, for the withering contempt with which he queried whether I could get four annas for it was meant to be a reflection not on the merits of the performance but on the mentality that could waste effort and time on such futilities. It scorched my further application to picture making for quite a while.

There is a mystical discordance

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between Ananth and motors. The old time Ford of the thirties—not the tinnizzies of antiquity—was impeccable as to performance and the particular one in which we drove to our picnic rendezvous 25 miles away was new and moved with the precision of a planet and the sensitiveness of a touch-me-not plant. Ananth would take the wheel on the way back late in the evening in spite of our protest, for we knew his idiosyncrasy. The road no doubt was not a spread of velvet, but Ananth knew it and the motor knew and was used to it. Why it should take it into its obstinate bonnet to stop pulsating all of a sudden, when we were near about the 15th mile stone in gathering darkness, a threat of rain and a black cotton soil expanse with not a sign of animation as far as eye could see, it still remains a mystery. We had to leg it for a matter of 10 miles before we reached haven, foot sore, weary and sodden. When the driver reached the car the next forenoon, not a thing was found amiss and the engine purred as sweetly as ever! Speaking of machinery, my own pet trouble is a watch. My watch repairer, a kindly old Mohamadan with no great facility with language, either English or my vernacular, gets himself into a muddle attempting to give me advice without unduly hurting my feelings whenever I take one to him for repair.

My friend Doraiswami was an engineer by profession and a philosopher by temperament. He was also what one might call a much married man, in the sense that domesticity in the shape of baby foods and napkins, a din of rattles and piping whistles were a chronic miasma about him. Summation of whatever virtue there was in life for him was to see that all the children were quietly in bed, stretch his limbs on an easy chair with a leg extension and read all the treasury-bench-baiting speeches end to end. Not for nothing was he nicknamed 'The Right Hon'ble' in his college days. Short, full cheeked and stocky, Doraiswami had a phlegmatic peccability, which while it acted as a douche of cold water on ebullient enthusiasms, had a restfulness which was a balm in trials and depressions. We chummed it rather well in the early days of our officialdom, though acting somewhat as a foil each to the

other. The Dasara holidays bearing near, I prevailed on Dorai after much high pressure persuasion to accompany me on a holiday trip to certain places of artistic, historical and archaeological interest. He was to be in charge of the purse and the schedule of timings and I was to be knowledgeable about the places. Hampi was the first place of visit. Few can see the fallen grandeur that was Vijayanagar and its violated palaces and temples without being profoundly and articulately moved. We wended our way through the 3 or 4 miles of ruins seeing the granite car and fretted columns wrought as it were with the goldsmith's art, of the Vithoba temple, the huge mutilated images of Narasimha, Vighneswara and Nandi and the wide car street in front of Pampapathi with its fallen granite structures. I vivified in words what each place should have looked like in its honoured days and recalled the magnificence of the forgotten empire, as it stood as the last bastion against the Moslem deluge, its art and wealth, the learning of Vidyasagar, its minister in its palmiest period and even built up a plausible romance on the bathing pavilion fed from Tungabhadra waters. Dorai registered each item with a nod or a grin or a cryptic hm but no more. May be he was interested in his mild way but he was more interested in recalling my laggard footsteps to the rest house lest we miss the lunch and bus timings.

Next in our itinerary was Badami, the extinct capital of Chalukkian kings. If time can be said to stand still at any place, it is so at old 'Vathapi' for the lake below which the extant township stands and its bathing ghat can be transposed into the scene of its pristine importance, twelve hundred years gone by, without much anachronism. We explored the Hindu and Jain caves on the bunding hills about the lake, while I dilated on the temple architecture of the place and its surroundings and their significance as the meeting ground of the northern curvilinear and the southern storeyed pyramidal forms of towers. I narrated about Chalukkian contacts with Persia and Hieuen Tsang's visit to this and to Harshavardhana's court, which lead me naturally to Harsha's greatness and tolerance in an era when

Mohamadans were carrying their new found religion across continents with fire and fury and the Christian world was rent in jealous worldly schisms between Rome and Byzantium.

All, a jumble of words so far as Doraiswami was concerned! It is funny how to some a fallen stone pillar or a broken effigy clairvoyantly raises up a panoramic vista of a glamorised past, wherein kings and emperors in their high glory march past with their courtiers and courtesans, their bejewelled horses and caparisoned elephants and to others they are just pieces of hand wrought rockery. The conceit is, that in a world of 'Realities' namely, pay, prospects, pensions, T. A. rules, audit objections and the boy's next school term fees, sentimental rhapsody about extinct emperors and empires makes for an unnecessary waste of conservable feeling and energy.

We next moved to Bijapur, the glory of Adilshahi sultans. We threatened through the dirty streets and made for the different sights—visited the Jami Musjid and the various mahals including the one in which a hair of the Prophet's beard is kept in honoured sanctity. And last, by deliberate design on my part, to the Ghol Gumbaz, the stupendous structure upstanding sheer to a height of 200 feet to the enormous dome where three centuries ago Mahamad Adilshah, his wives and progeny and Mahamad's mistress from Ceylon are all buried. Up and up we went to reach the overhanging balcony below the vast dome. I placed Doraiswami on a seat against

one of the facets of the dome and pretending to walk casually along, set myself against the opposite facet and whispered to the walls: "Hallo! Dorai, how do you like this?" Doraiswami blinked to verify where exactly I was speaking from but finding me over a hundred feet away his face wrinkled up in a delightful mystery. I again whispered and asked him to answer to the wall. He looked above and below and all around before he brought himself to hold a conversation across the whispering hall. For once in his life time Doraiswami was galvanised out of his phlegm into an amazement that was distilled nectar to me. When shocked out of his self-contained cynicism by the catharsis of genuine wonder Dorai made a furore of exclamations to which my stale string of expletives was just a glow worm before the sun. But they made a healing emollient to my still smarting cicatrices from his past sapient silences and damnations with faint praise.

The walls of Doraiswami's dwelling are innocent of any pictures other than a few framed photographs of himself and family and of the send-off-group idiocies that clutter a transferable officer's effects from place to place. He never had any venal leanings towards landscapes and woodcuts apart from what were incidental to lurid calendars. Since this holiday trip however there is one solitary exception, for in the principal room where Doraiswami's table and easy-chair lie, on the wall facing the entrance there is a large picture of Ghol Gumbaz of Bijapur.



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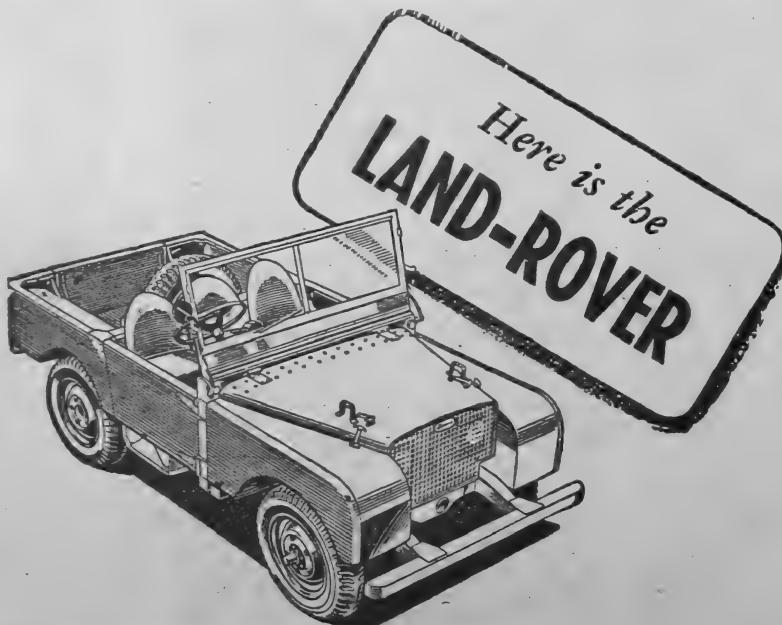


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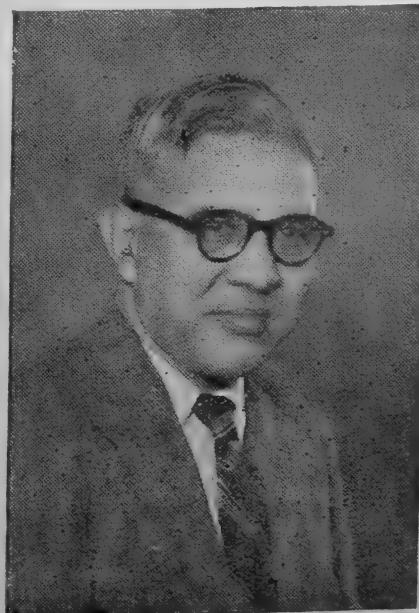
By S. NARAYANASWAMY

THERE is such a thing as running away with the bit between one's teeth. Since Britain decided to take us by storm and served Independence to us on a cake plate some four years ago, we have been trying heroically to conceal our unpreparedness therefor by getting drunk with more of those slogans and war-whoops, which served us so well on street corner soap boxes, when we were engaged in sonorous declamations against the ruling race. The slogans were mostly political in character. Now the field of finance is being invaded by the ubiquitous slogan coiners. In fact the financial world is getting slogan-dominated. Among these cries is the one that capital is on strike. This was raised in Parliament followed by suggestions of drastic action to be taken against the supposed strikers. Ministers and publicists have been talking about this so-called strike of capital on public platforms, in chambers of commerce and broadcast talks.

It is important in the first place to find out who these people are who in the past have provided capital for industry. The overwhelming part of all capital for industry has been provided by the middle-class man, from

out of his savings. Ever since the notorious Liaquat Ali Khan budget descended on the Indian economic horizon like some blighting atomic mist, stock exchanges and chambers of commerce have been at pains to point out this astonishingly little known fact time and again. Lists of shareholders of representative joint stock companies in India, the shares of which are dealt in on the Indian markets were analysed carefully. It was agreed generally that those persons who held shares of the face value of Rs. 5,000 and under are to be treated as middle-class holders. In the case of the overwhelming number of companies, it was found that

80% of all shareholders were persons holding Rs. 5,000 face-value or below. In other words the middle class constituted more than the backbone of joint stock companies shareholding. In several cases such holdings went up to 90% in both numbers and quantum of capital. In 1947, Liaquat Ali Khan proclaimed loudly that it was his objective, in introducing devastating fiscal measures like the business profits and capital gains taxes, to hit the big capitalists on the head. The somewhat facile but



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rather popular assumption behind this action of Government was that the Du Ponts, the Nuffields and the Rockefellers of the Indian financial world would bear the brunt of the new tax burdens. But the bulk of the burden fell on the shoulders of the middle-classes.

The middle-classes have been the largest losers in the stock market debacle that traces its origin to the Liaquat Budget of 1947. At one time the real value of stock exchange securities declined from a matter of 1500 crores in 1946 to about 600 crores in 1948-49. Is it to be expected that the middle class will stage a comeback to the arena of stock exchange investment, which has proved so vulnerable from the point of view of capital safety?

The second and perhaps more important reason for the springs of capital formation drying up is that the middle-class man has no savings now. With the curve of inflation steadily rising and with salaries and dearness allowances not being increased proportionately, the middle-class man is not only unable to save anything, but is landing himself in widening deficits. In a factory worker's family, more than one person is gainfully employed. Wages and dearness allowances, thanks to trade union clamour and adjudication awards, are strictly correlated to cost of living indices. In fact, in this sector as in the agriculturists' sector, there are savings, but these are communities that have never been educated to invest in stocks and it is this which the "economists and calculators" have characterised as the shift in savings groups. The middle-class man, working in urban areas where living costs are oppressive, has thus none of the advantages of the industrial operative.

There is presently no indication that the inflationary pressure on goods and services will be relaxed in any worthwhile measure in the coming years. On the other hand, there is one factor which is bound to add significantly to the present pressure of inflation. This is the implementing of the Five-Year Plan by the Centre and the States. This is not said to disparage the merits of the Plan, but the fact is inescapable that this spending programme on development

will accentuate the pressure of money supply on our limited volume of goods. In any case there is little reason to look for an arrest of inflationary forces, much less a reversion to disinflation. While the purchasing power of money thus remains at present levels, the middle-class man will not be able to revert to the happy era of savings. Until he does so, the flow of fresh capital to industry is unlikely. To call this total inability to save money and provide capital for industry on the part of the middle-class man 'strike of capital' is to spout pure rhetoric.

What, on the other hand, is really on strike—if you are particularly fond of this unhappy word—is external capital and this promises to be a long term strike. If one may say so, this started not as a strike but as a lock-out. Some of our legislators talked first of legislating foreign capital out of India and later found out the amazing unwise of this talk. There were those that had nostrums for nationalisation of external interests. America and Britain have had plenty of experience of their Asiatic investments in China and Burmah and their inability to repatriate their interests has been full of morals and maxims. They were not too anxious to dump their resources in India after she became independent. But this stage-heroic sabre-rattling of our politicians put the tin hat on any inclination on the part of British or American entrepreneurs to invest money in India. Then of course we have our foreign policy of non-alignment, which is doing its bit in keeping American or British aid at bay. Quite the most diverting part of our talk about external aid is the complacent manner in which we persuade ourselves that external aid is being thrust on us; and then proceed to talk of strings being attached thereto, which are deeply distasteful to us. External aid, from what one can see, is going to be confined to *ad hoc* loans by the International Monetary Fund at purely Governmental level.

In Abadan is being enacted a grim drama. The nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's assets and oil fields has been watched with concern by every Western country which has invested in Asia. The moral

of the developments in Iran is that there is no sanctity about covenants and Governmental guarantees. Industries are built to stay put for decades and centuries—but captains and kings depart—so do premiers, cabinets and parties in power. A successor Government may take a different view of the solemnity of covenants and brazenly violate them. Let us not therefore run away with the idea that merely by guaranteeing non-nationalisation and offering facilities for remittances of profits, we can induce the foreign entrepreneur to invest money and develop our industries.

Let us therefore reconcile ourselves to the reality that while in the domestic sphere there is no question of a capital strike, there is a strike of external capital, which is likely to be prolonged.

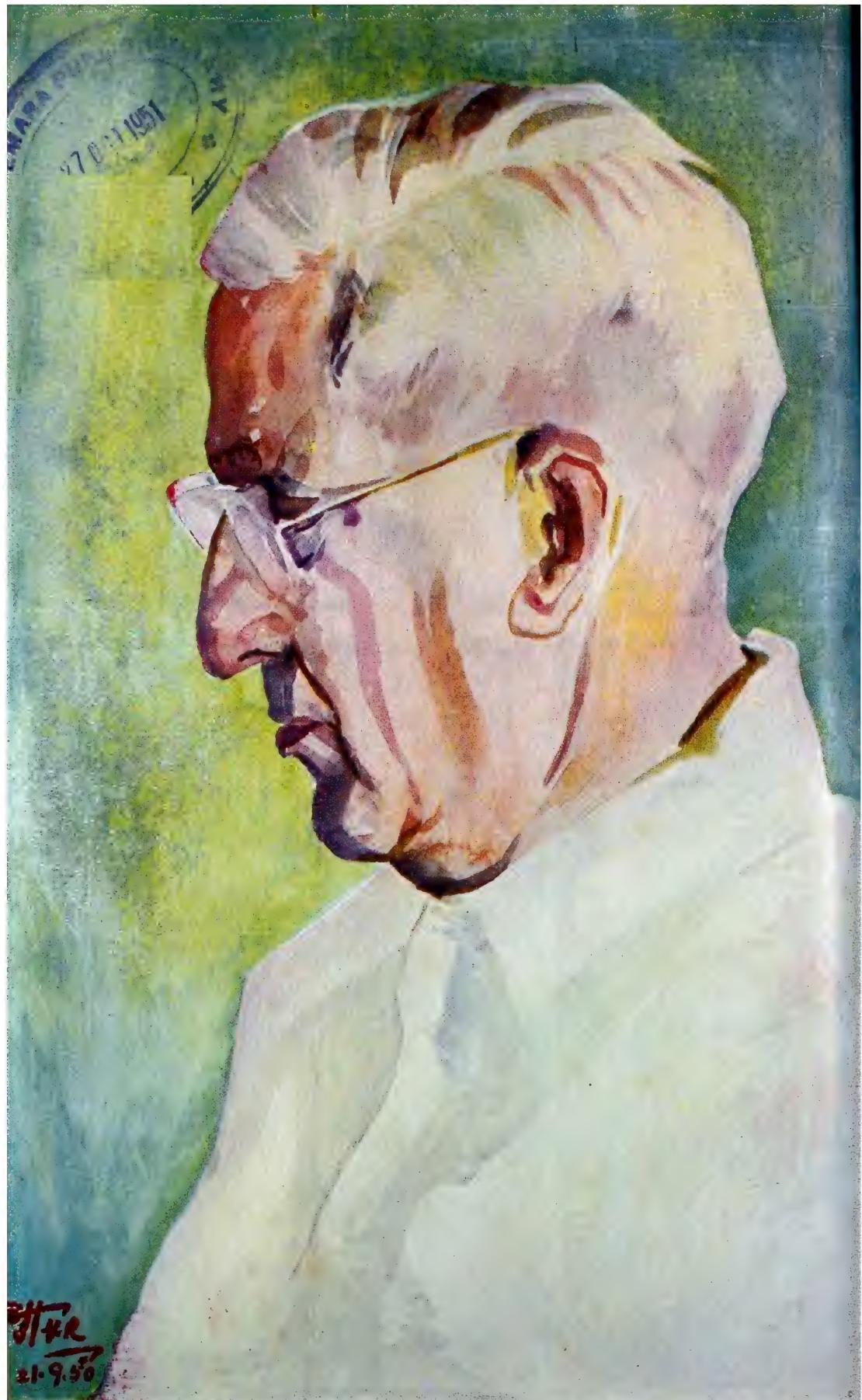
Well, it is not enough to be defeatist and indulge in Cassandra-like prophecies of doomsday and call it realism. Something must be done to revive capital formation. If we wait for savings to accrue to the middle-classes, it means either a substantial deflation of currency or a phenomenal rise in salaries and allowances. To expect either to happen is to engage in day-dreams. Increased production over a range of years is alone likely to reduce inflationary pressure, not jugglery with note issue.

Convinced as we all are of the shift in savings, the main thing to do is to examine the question of mobilising savings in the agricultural sector, which is the single biggest available source of capital today. There is now official procurement of grain and payment of controlled prices therefor by Government. By common consent, agriculture has not made any contribution proportionate to its importance in Indian economy to the economic development of India and taxation of agriculture has certainly not been in proportion to prosperity. What is now suggested is not taxation, but something else. When procurement prices are paid for foodgrains, say 5% out of it may be retained by Government, for which they may issue 10 year cash certificates to the agriculturists. Such a levy should over a period of years yield a sizable sum, which may be funded with the Industrial Finance

Corporation, who may pay on such amounts a small interest. Where industries are started privately and under management satisfactory to Government, and a certain amount of capital is subscribed by the public, the Finance Corporation should invest a similar sum in the shares of the company, subject to a maximum in money investible in any one company and with right of representation on the boards of the companies. A spread of such investment over several industrial sectors should ensure safety of capital and reasonable return on money to the Finance Corporation to pay for their being out of pocket in the non-dividend earning initial years, when they pay interest on the certificates to agriculturists. The present is the best time to make a start with agriculturists, who are hesitating to invest their savings in more land—with threats of land legislation in the horizon.

Another quarter which may yield up savings is the industrial worker—though the amount available from this source is limited by the small number of industrial workers in the country. Nevertheless it would be worthwhile introducing schemes for issue of cash certificates bearing small interest in respect of say 10% of the basic wages. Trade unions clamour for Government intervention and adjudication in industrial disputes now and again and Government may pertinently ask for reciprocal cooperation from trade unions. The unions may themselves be asked to appeal to the workers for cooperation.

The Government must also create the climate for capital formation: negatively by abstaining from ill-timed pronouncements on nationalisation; positively by quickening land allotments to industrial ventures, by speedy issue of import permits, help through embassies in procuring plant, machinery and technical personnel on advantageous terms; and in concluding long term contracts for supply of raw material and chemicals where unavailable in India; and last but not least by discriminating tax reliefs. True, all these take time. All constructive effort takes time to bear fruit. All the more reason for our making an early start with this Labour of Hercules and for stopping loose talk of a Strike of Capital.



# SIDELIGHTS : :

Already there are daily newspapers and weekly reviews that gain immeasurably in respect and authority from the public knowledge that they cannot be bought and sold, that profit is not their main concern and that their editors have security and independence.—KINGSLEY MARTIN.

IT is fortunate for *The Hindu* that after the passing away of Sri Kasturiranga Aiyangar, it passed into the hands of Sri Srinivasan. He is the first of the managing editors of the Press in India. The title, managing editor, does not conjure up happy associations, having come into odium through the record of many that have assumed it. It generally signifies one who, having obtained control of a newspaper as property, utilises it to appoint himself to its editorial chair. Ordinarily, managing editors are given to posing as journalistic giants professionally while they blackmarket in politics, treating politics and newsprint impartially as commodities for profiteering. Within their own offices, by staffs boiling with suppressed rage over the unfairness of things, most managing editors are regarded as intruders from an alien world to be endured as inflictions of an unkind fate. Srinivasan, though a managing editor, has none of the insufferable proprietorial airs of being a buyer of men's souls. With his simplicity, restraint in the exercise of power, and a certain natural bonhomie of his own, he has overcome the incorrigible residual rebelliousness of the journalistic craft, and managed to establish himself with his staff on a footing of trust and confidence.

\* \* \* \* \*

This result was not obtained in a day. It was the outcome of years of conscientious striving in the building of traditions of reliability. Its initial momentum came from deep filial devotion. Srinivasan's respect for his father as the architect of the greatness of *The Hindu* was boundless. He had a sense of his living presence on important occasions when momentous decisions had to be taken. A newspaper confers a sort of power on its owner, as it is a means to direct

approach of the people whose voice and opinion count in the making and unmaking of parties in their bid for State-control. This power, of course, does not belong to all newspapers. That part of the Press which delights crazily in stunts to expand circulations, and specialises in smutty and exciting stories of sex and crime, lotteries, prizes, and astrological predictions of what the stars have in store for you and me during the week, might be splendid commercially, but it has precious little influence on public affairs. Lord Acton's dictum on the corrupting influence of power applies no less to the Press than to politics. But Srinivasan was saved from the fatal effects of power—the power that comes from directing a great newspaper—by the rigidity with which he imposed on himself an imaginary paternal supervision that was none the less effective because it was sentimental. It was as if he lived in a great taskmaster's eye.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not that he ever was, or now is, tied tamely to parental apron strings. He no doubt idealised his father, but he is not a soft replica of him. Sri Kasturiranga Aiyangar was just, but stern. He was an inexorable disciplinarian. He had a scrupulous sense of the imperativeness of independence of judgment for the preservation, in fullest measure, of the power of journalism, and he guarded it zealously by avoiding all social relations that might impose obligations and weaken the will. Srinivasan inherited all his father's sense of fairness, but not his unapproachability. Srinivasan's mild exterior is quite misleading. It masks a firm will kept in reserve for intrepid action on chosen occasions. Sri Kasturiranga Aiyangar was entirely self-reliant and never invited criticism. None dared to criticise him to his face or to offer advice. Srinivasan deferred to his father's judgments normally out of deep respect, but he had also grit enough to differ from him when impelled thereto by a sense of duty. Toughness of calibre out of the ordinary was required to approach one like Sri Kasturiranga Aiyangar with a

remonstrance against any course he had chosen, but Srinivasan evinced it in flashes of native assertiveness. He has as much strength of mind as his father had, but with more affability. And he is a keener and shrewder businessman. For the changed times Srinivasan was just the sort of Editor that *The Hindu* needed to push its fortunes to a zenith.

\* \* \* \* \*

The daily editorial conference of senior members over which Srinivasan presides, is the policy-making forum of *The Hindu*. While the conference is in session, all conventional restraints pertaining to differences in status are laid aside. Perfect freedom of discussion prevails. Not infrequently the stormiest controversy flourishes unchecked, the disputants not budging an inch from their respective viewpoints. It is from this hammering of differing minds on the anvil of unrestrained debate that the policies and traditions of *The Hindu* have taken shape. In their final form they signify a journalism of compromise and of collective impersonal give and take as the source of the influence of *The Hindu*.

The effectiveness of the mild word not only in turning away wrath but in compelling attention, is not realised by most practitioners of journalism.

The general tendency is to mistake the use of strong adjectives for powerful writing. Thick print is employed by way of emphasis and banner headlines running into seven columns to indicate the importance of events. This type of presentation is worked up to exhaustion in no time. And when something really important occurs, it is left without means of emphasis adequate to the occasion. *The Hindu* has cut itself away from all this commonplace riotous indulgence in extremism. A little emphasis in *The Hindu* therefore goes a longer way towards producing the desired effect than all the shouting of less balanced contemporaries.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the journalism of the future, bravado will be of negligible value. Srinivasan, without an iota of bravado in him, and with a horror of the language of denunciation, conceives it to be the main duty of the Press to spread the faculty of intelligent discrimination among newspaper readers. Most of our newspapers, yet in an infantile condition, are prone to be guided by the morals of the fish market. *The Hindu* shines as an exemplar of mature wisdom under no need to give proof of its status. The value of editorial objectivity is everywhere recognised, but in actual practice, the influences that tend to imperil it are legion. No newspaper precariously poised, without sufficient means to meet its expenses easily, can afford to be objective. Its thunder is spoiled by abject supplications for the patronage of the rich and the powerful to enable it to live. In all the country there are not half a dozen papers with impregnable economic solvency in a condition to defy the various sorts of pressures that militate against perfect journalistic freedom. But some of these are tied up with commercial adventures and are pulled in the manner of puppets by speculators entrenched in other spheres. *The Hindu* has been saved from a similar plight by Srinivasan's lifelong habit of putting all its profits into its own till, avoiding the fatal lure of gambling and the like to get rich quick. His two great hobbies are music and sport, and *Sport and Pastime*, with its meteoric rapidity of rise in popular favour, illustrates the secret of his keeping young and fresh.



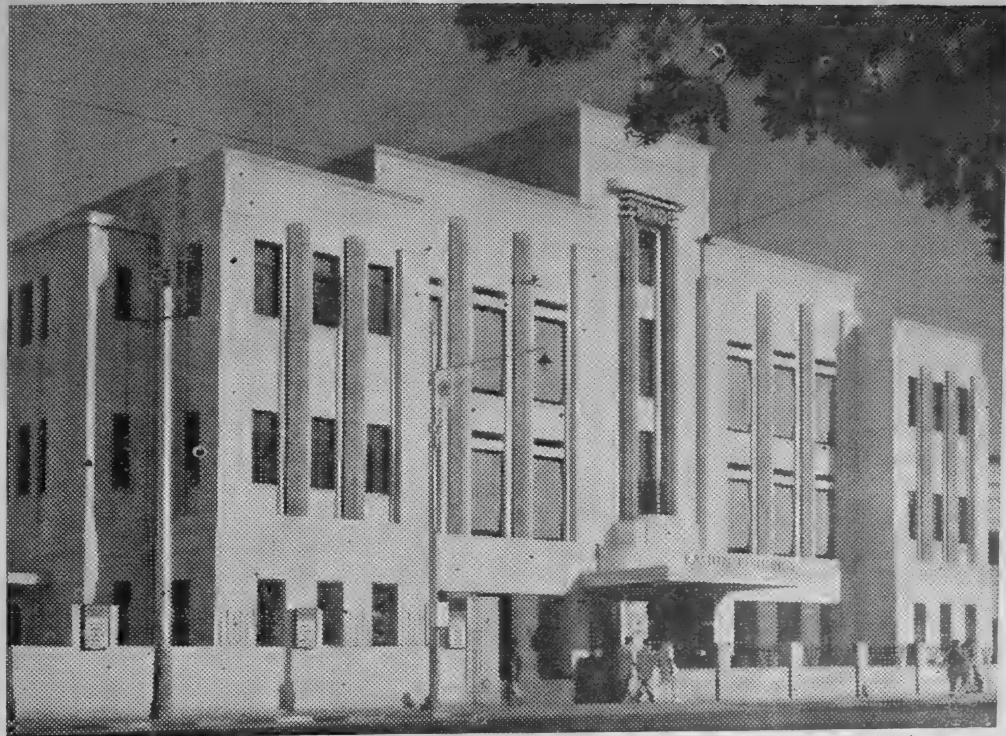
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Among the British and Americans in our midst, there is noticeable an immense curiosity about Srinivasan. They seem to have sized him up as a gem of a man, alert, reliable, shrewd, cautious, kind and modest. They rate *The Hindu* as the greatest newspaper in the country. Some of them however hold that on matters of grave controversy where vast public issues are at stake and the fates of whole populations hang in the balance between life and death, salvation and ruin, *The Hindu* has not been as enterprising as its resources allow, contenting itself with being a passive chronicler of events and not an active crusader in the risky move-

ments of our turbulent times. But all salute its grand objectivity—the most essential of attributes for honesty in journalism. Our Press magnates are addicted to prodigious effort at home and abroad to impress on others their ability, intelligence and importance. It is surprising how little they have succeeded, and what headway Srinivasan has made, with all his shyness, lack of gumption and tongue-tied way with strangers. In England last year, in practically every town we visited, some local resident, frequently a journalist, would come, and with an unmistakable inflection of the voice indicative of deference, ask to have his greetings conveyed to "Mr. Srinivasan of *The Hindu*". I felt then that to be a countryman of Srinivasan known to him was a passport to goodwill in a strange land.—SAKA.

*The Pope may launch his Interdict,  
The Union its decree,  
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